Animated Diplomacy: Myth, Propaganda, Ideologically Balanced Cartoons, and Jewish-Arab Society through the Lens of Caricature

“Mythology is not a lie, mythology is poetry, it is metaphorical. It has been well said that mythology is the penultimate truth – penultimate because the ultimate cannot be put into words. It is beyond words. Beyond images, beyond that bounding rim of the Buddhist Wheel of Becoming. Mythology pitches the mind beyond that rim, to what can be known but not told.”
— Joseph Campbell, The Power of Myth

Abstract: This paper presents how ideologically balanced, representational mythology can mitigate intractable conflict. I describe the history of cartoons (broadly defined to encompass caricature, editorial cartoons, comics, graphic novels, illustration, animation, and puppetry) and their ability to influence society and subvert authority. I examine meme theory, collective consciousness, and the history of ideology, mythology, and caricature. I synthesize Jewish, Middle Eastern, and North African culture, history, and religion through cartoons. Finally, I apply my theory of change to the Israeli/Palestinian Issue – Olive Branch Pictures Inc, a representational, ideologically balanced comics and animation studio for conflict mediation and edutainment.

Keywords: Cultural Diplomacy, Peacebuilding, Cartoon, Narrative, Mythology, Edutainment, Memetics, Semiotics, Conflict Mediation, Propaganda, Public Relations, Comics, Animation, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, Israeli, Palestinian, Israel, Palestine, Arab, Jewish, Diaspora, Art

Commented [1]: Maybe add something like: “and attempt to provide a balanced analysis of the Israeli and Palestinian narratives” or “and attempt to explain the Israeli and Palestinian narratives with deference given to both sides”

Commented [2]: Maybe somewhere in the abstract I should state the intention of this paper to strive for objectivity especially in regard to the presentation of controversial subject such as the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, utilizing a plethora of diverse, expert editorial perspectives, attempting to present key counterarguments and counter-evidence surrounding inconclusive ideas.
History, Anthropology, Comparative Literature, Art History, Storytelling, Cultural Production, Linguistics, Hebrew, Arabic, Semitic, Middle East, Islam, Judaism, Religion, Representation, Social Enterprise, Social Entrepreneurship, Game Theory, International Relations

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Introduction

Humans are the only species capable of telling stories. Storytelling allows us to form social groups beyond Dunbar’s Number – the number of people who we can form sustainable, meaningful relationship with, approximately 150.¹ These mythologies, religious texts, literature, and historical narratives have formed value and behavior systems and identities across civilization.

In his book Sapiens, Yuval Noah Harari supports the capacity of myth to unite and civilize societies: “large numbers of strangers can cooperate successfully by believing in common myths. Any large-scale human cooperation – whether a modern state, a medieval church, an ancient city or an archaic tribe – is rooted in common myths that exist only in people’s collective imagination.”²

From Scheherazade’s One Thousand and One Nights, the Tales of the Brothers Grimm and Harry Potter to Greek Mythology and the sacred text of the Abrahamic, Hindu, and Buddhist dharmas, all stories serve to promote morality, create meaning, and orient society.

There is a middle ground between the secular and the religious, that such stories, such myths, can metaphorically communicate the nature and ideals of the collective humanity, developed over centuries of socialization, to the level of aggregate psychological truth or divine


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inspiration. In his work, *The Concept of the Collective Unconscious*, psychologist Carl Jung asserts that humans inherit a psychic system that manifests as archetypal thoughts and behaviors.³ Where Jung reveals these unconscious archetypes in the psychoanalysis of dreams, Joseph Campbell finds evidence in the mythology of diverse civilizations, from Osiris, Prometheus, and the Buddha to Moses, Jesus, and Mohammad (peace be upon them). In his seminal work, “The Hero with A Thousand Faces”, Campbell writes, “whether we listen with aloof amusement to the dreamlike mumbo jumbo of some red-eyed witch doctor of the Congo, or read with cultivated rapture thin translations from the sonnets of the mystic Lao-tse; now and again crack the hard nutshell of an argument of Aquinas, or catch suddenly the shining meaning of a bizarre Eskimo fairy tale: it will be always the one, shape-shifting yet marvelously constant story that we find, together with a challengingly persistent suggestion of more remaining to be experienced than will ever be known or told.” Campbell’s work directly influenced *Star Wars* and many other modern stories. Such myths and stories that embody the archetypal “Hero’s Journey”, or “Monomyth”, inform people how to mature, overcome obstacles, win allies and mentors, know right from wrong, and find love. Campbell writes, “A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder:

fabulous forces are there encountered, and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.”

In his 1955 work, *The Great Mother*, Erich Neumann, considered the intellectual heir of Carl Jung, theorized four fundamental stages in women’s psychological development, tracing the genealogy and symbolism of goddess figures in world culture. In the “Matriarchal” stage the ego and the unconscious are fused in psychic unity, symbolized by *uroboros*, an ancient symbol of a snake both devouring and giving birth to itself.

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In the second stage, there is spiritual invasion and domination by the Great Father archetype, which is associated with rationalism and monotheism. In the third stage, the woman embodies the masculine, a rescuing hero who liberates the young woman from the controlling father but yokes her to conventional marriage under new male authority. Sex roles are polarized, with masculinity and femininity mutually exclusive. Neumann’s fourth and final stage has feminist implications: here the mature woman discovers her authentic self. As she borrows from the masculine, sex roles become blurred.⁵,⁶

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In 1990, Maureen Murdock wrote *The Heroine’s Journey: Woman’s Quest for Wholeness* in response to Campbell’s model. Murdock felt that “the hero’s journey” failed to address the psycho-spiritual journey of contemporary women. She developed a model describing the cyclical nature of the female experience. Campbell’s response to Murdock’s model was, “Women don’t need to make the journey” (…) “In the whole mythological tradition, the woman is there. All she has to do is to realize that she’s the place that people are trying to get to”.\(^7\) According to Murdock, that may be true mythologically as the hero or heroine seeks

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\(^7\) Campbell, 1981.
illumination, but psychologically, the journey of the contemporary heroine involves different stages. The Heroine’s Journey begins with an initial separation from feminine values, seeking recognition and success in a patriarchal culture, experiencing spiritual death, and turning inward to reclaim the power and spirit of the sacred feminine. The final stages involve an acknowledgement of the union and power of one’s dual nature for the benefit of all humankind. Drawing upon cultural myths, Murdock illustrates an alternative journey model to that of patriarchal hegemony, which has become a template for novelists and screenwriters, illuminating twentieth-century feminist literature.  

These theories however do not represent LGBTQ+ nor post-modern feminist psyches.  

Additionally, they metaphorically represent archetypes and do not account for the potential for sustainable collective transformation through the generational relationship between genetic and environmental (socio-cultural) evolution.\textsuperscript{9,10,11,12,13} Furthermore, these theories cannot be applied uniformly on an individual level due to genetic and environmental variance.\textsuperscript{14}

Myths have been a source of tribal unity since the dawn of civilization.\textsuperscript{15} In the book, “Imagined Communities”, Benedict Anderson argues that beyond geo-linguistic kinship, nations largely exist in the collective imagination of individuals. National identity is manifested in the production of myth, history, language, tradition, etc., in which the institutions of education and media play a significant role.\textsuperscript{16}

Like the gene, “memes” are “units of culture” that can pass from one individual to another and multiply to form systems of values. Stories are organized clusters of memes like how clusters of organized genes can form organelles, organs, and organisms. The way that

memes are transmitted across generations and between cultures supports Jung’s concept of collective unconscious. In a perfect market of ideas, the more truth and utility they have, the more they spread and withstand the test of time.\textsuperscript{17}

Stories, spread by inter-cultural osmosis or media, can be a form of cultural diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy is a form of soft power that includes the exchange of ideas, information, art, language, and other forms of culture among peoples and nations. The goals of cultural diplomacy are, through acts of good-will and humanity, to influence a foreign audience to cooperate, earn support for policies, mollify conflict, and foster understanding.\textsuperscript{18} In contrast, diplomacy is often described as “war by other means”.\textsuperscript{19}

Figure 1. Brian Waniewski. “What’s a Narrative”. Harmony Labs, Medium (2021).

Cultural diplomacy can also be used as propaganda. Propaganda is defined as “information, ideas, opinions, or images, often only giving one part of an argument, that are


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spread with the intention of influencing people's opinions. In the 20th century, the term *propaganda* was often associated with a manipulative approach, but historically, propaganda has been a neutral descriptive term. In Spanish, “propaganda” simply means “advertising”. A wide range of materials and media are used for conveying propaganda messages, which changed as new technologies were invented, including paintings, cartoons, posters, pamphlets, films, radio shows, TV shows, and websites. More recently, the digital age has given rise to new ways of disseminating propaganda, for example, bots and algorithms are currently being used to create computational propaganda and fake or biased news and spread it on social media.

Manipulative intent, omission of counterpoint, and selective editing generally distinguish propaganda from education. Education should be designed to teach how to think, not what to think. However, some propagandists may look upon themselves as educators, that their perspective is truth, and any effort to convince or spread that truth is for the greater good. “Education” for one person may be “propaganda” for another.

Public relations (PR) is the practice of managing and disseminating information from an individual or an organization (such as a business, government agency, or a nonprofit organization) to the public in order to affect their public perception. The field was pioneered by Edward Bernays, the “father of public relations”, who believed that “Engineering consent” of...
the masses would be vital for the survival of democracy. Bernays advocated for the media as an authoritative tool against authoritarianism, which is in constant conflict with the anarchy bubbling under the surface of democracy and its principal value, liberty.

As Egyptian artist Ganzeer puts it, apply [PR] to a culture and what you have is mythology. Artists have the power to shape and reshape that mythology and create new ideas about our shared identity.”

All art and media can be viewed as a form of propaganda. The absence of overt politics in art or popular cultural production can be perceived (generally from a Marxist/socialist perspective as well as genuinely oppressed or marginalized people) as the reinforcement of the status quo or dominant ideologies though is it possible that such production could be conspiratorial media manipulation as well.

Similarly, Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci asserts in his theory of hegemony that the elite maintain status quo dominance by using ideology rather than violence, economic power, or coercion to create self-propagating structures of values and norms.

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21 Edward Bernays. “Propaganda” p.11

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These views however contrast with the way of god brought by Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato from oral tradition that “if wealth and poverty did not exist, there would be no opportunity for people to demonstrate either generosity or indifference. (...) That wealth exists allows the rich to be tested by [their] advantage, determine whether [they] will be generous or indifferent to the poor who need [their] help. The poor are likewise tested to determine whether or not they will be satisfied and thank God for the little that they have”.27

Egyptian rulers famously used wall paintings to construct national narratives for the public as did Italian plutocrats such as the Medici family, helping to spread Christianity through beautiful and expensive imagery.28, 29

According to Plato, art is a form of “mimesis”, meaning representation or imitation, of nature or society. This perspective shaped the general perception of Western art for centuries as the reflection of what is beautiful and/or meaningful.30 In contrast, modern art emerged in the 19th century in rejection of realism, giving way to forms like abstract art and parody.31

Everyone is biased; limited in our perception. The intentions and identity of the creator matters but perhaps what matters most is its reception.32, 33

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Ideology, systems of ideas and ideals applied to society can be divided into the real and the idea, what is and what ought to be. The ideal can then be divided into the positive and the negative, praise and criticism. Breaking it down further we understand ideology as: 1. Interpretation – a means of understanding the world. 2. Integration – a means of reinforcing cohesion and identity. 3. Domination – a means of maintaining control by elites through manipulation. 4. Legitimization – a means of legitimizing authority and a specific social order. 5. Normative Logic – a contextual set of rules, guidelines and norms that facilitate and prescribe action based on individual and group experience. 6. Social Theory – in which perception of reality is determined through open discourse and rationality. 7. Fantasy Structuring Social Reality – in which no experience of social reality can exist outside of ideology. And then of course there’s religion which could be represent any or all these forms of ideology and can be described essentially as mythological objectivism.

In *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973), Anthropologist Clifford Geertz described culture as a system of inherited concepts expressed through signs and symbols by means of which people communicate, perpetuate, and develop their perception of reality. To Geertz, in addition to recorded and oral tradition and expression, it is the role of the anthropologist to interpret cultures through semiotics.

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Semiotics is the study of signs – sounds, objects, qualities, acts, events, images, and words, and how they indicate meaning in society through metaphor (symbols) and simile (icons)\(^{37}\) even individual letters.\(^{38,39,40}\)

In his book *Mythologies* (1957), Barthes asserts that none of our ideas, our very language, are our own. He argues that mythology isn’t something from the past but a constant

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and necessary function of communication, which allows society to function by aligning our individual perspectives into collective social parameters.\textsuperscript{41, 42}

In “Manufacturing Consent”, Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman argue that news outlets cover events in ways that favor the [competing] ideologies of controlling, shareholding elites and that due to revenue incentives, news outlets focus on stories that sell.

Today, the internet and social media has democratized media production and distribution, fragmenting the influence of the establishment media elite.

The question is, to what extent does the media we consume reflect, construct, criticize, and mythologize reality?

In fact, the word “media” is the plural of the Latin word “medium”, literally meaning “middle ground” or “intermediate” thus media also simply implies a form of communication. Its modern usage as a word to describe newspapers, radio and other sources of information likely derives from the term ‘mass media’ which was a technical term used in the advertising industry from the 1920s on.\textsuperscript{43}

Aristotle’s \textit{Poetics} describes the ability of art, and stories specifically, to achieve catharsis of emotional tension for the audience. In the Arab world, particularly Egypt and the Levant (Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine), before the arrival of theatre and TV, “\textit{Hakawatis}” – “storytellers” – were a major source of entertainment. People would gather in coffee shops,
homes or public spaces to listen as the *Hakawati* would narrate stories of heroism, action or romance in the form of tragedies and comedies containing all sorts of events and characters, fictional or real, often spontaneous, sometimes pre-conceived, and always with a moral or lesson in the end. If an issue arose in the community, a *Hakawati* might embed relevant solutions to the real-life conflict within the story.

Similar is the Jewish tradition of the *Maggid*, literally “Teller” in Hebrew, the storytellers who would spin fantastic fables to teach Torah wisdom. Among the greatest Jewish Maggids of all time, the Dubner Maggid, (Rabbi Yaakov Krantz, d. 1804). When asked: “Why do we have two Torah celebrations both Simchas Torah (the completion of the annual Torah cycle) and

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Shavuos (commemorating the revelation of the Torah at Mt. Sinai)? Why not condense them into one grand Holiday? Characteristically – he responded with a story:

“A childless King and Queen were desperate. After many years, they visited a sage – who conveyed a potent blessing with a cautionary clause. Shortly, the Queen would successfully bear a baby girl. No man outside the family may see her until her wedding day, lest she die. And so it was. Upon the Queen’s birth of a baby girl, a secluded island was prepared for the Princess – where she was raised in regal style with the finest array of female educators and advisers.

As the Princess came of age, the King encountered a serious technical difficulty in marrying off his daughter. Each nobleman in the King’s court was thrilled to accept the princess’s hand in marriage – until it was explained that the first date and the wedding would coincide. On the verge of despair, the King approached the final nobleman – who remarkably assented to marry without even a peek.

As the wedding approached, our heroic nobleman began to experience buyer’s remorse as his repressed bridal fears shook him profoundly. For better, but probably for worse, he was stuck. On that wedding day, the whole world came to dance, except for the anxiety-stricken groom. As he peered underneath the veil, bracing for disaster, but inexplicably the princess was incredibly beautiful. A nagging nervousness persisted: “What’s the catch?” What of her personality? A woman marooned on an island her whole life? But none came. Every day she
revealed yet another wondrous aspect of her personality. Not only was she stunning, she was also spunky, spirited, charming and deep.

Months later, the nobleman approached his new father-in-law, unabashedly admitting his delight in his bride, with but one disappointment; he had essentially missed out on the wedding. The King decided that a new party would be arranged. All the guests would be invited back but this time only one person, the prince himself, would dance to express his absolute delight. And so it was.

Shavuos, explained the Dubner Maggid marks the Jew’s unshakable commitment to God’s wisdom and His Torah. Not knowing what was in the Torah, at Mt. Sinai, we proclaimed Na’aseh V’nishma (We will perform the mitzvot and then we will understand them). That faith remained blind until the Jew was exposed to the sweetness of the Torah. Simchas Torah celebrates, through dedication to Torah Study, the Jew’s joy and appreciation for the Torah.46

The nature of stories induces the audience to empathize and identify with the protagonist. In Understanding Comics, Scott McCloud explains the ability of cartoons to foster empathy. McCloud posits that the simplicity of cartoons allows viewers to identify with the characters as symbols, and, when juxtaposed with realistic backgrounds, to place that identification within their framework of reality.47 These effects allow the audience to accept the


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reality of the characters, as part of the “suspension of disbelief” embodied in all forms of fictional storytelling, and thus absorb the story’s meaning.

Stories can induce the audience to transform into the protagonist on a neurological level.48 Neurons react both when an action is performed and when it is observed, i.e. the sensation of eating chocolate when we observe others eating chocolate. These “mirror


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neurons” help explain why audiences adopt the same sensations felt by the character whose perspective is presented.49

The Influence of Cartoons

Cartoons often reveal undercurrent trends unconsciously molding society’s beliefs, values, desires, political inclinations, and private, intimate thoughts.50 The freedom of the pen enables a single image to capture ideas that would require a thousand words to express and can be spread and understood with ease.

The first use of political comic strips started in the 1700s in satirical magazines in Europe and spread to common use. Benjamin Franklin’s 1754 editorial cartoon, “Join, or Die”, among the earliest and most influential political cartoons in history, became a symbol of colonial freedom during the American Revolutionary War.51

Benjamin Franklin’s editorial cartoon, “Join, or Die”, The Pennsylvania Gazette, May 9, 1754.

Rodolphe Töpffer is considered the father of the modern comic strip with Histoire de Monsier Jabot in 1831. Growing popularity of Comic Strips led to 10 cent Pulp Magazines in 1896, featuring stories from adventure series to soap opera novelas. The 1930s saw a boom in

the growth of comics from the US, Britain, France, Italy and Japan and their influence grew to circle the globe.\textsuperscript{52}

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\caption{Rodolphe Töpffer’s Histoire de Monsier Jabot, 1831}
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The French referred to comics as “\textit{bandes dessinées}” meaning “drawn strips”, which contains no indication of subject matter, unlike “comics” and “funnies”, which imply a humorous art form and have pioneered comics as the "ninth art" (\textit{le neuvième art}) since the 1960s.\textsuperscript{53}

Stereotypes – “a conventional, formulaic, and oversimplified conception, opinion, or image” – are a type of symbol used by cartoonists.\textsuperscript{54} Cartoonists use stereotypes as part of a visual shorthand to communicate complicated ideas quickly and effectively. Like how a light bulb above a character’s head signifies an inspiration, stereotypes efficiently signify the appearance and behavior of social groups. Cartoon art depicting racial and ethnic characteristics may be based on overserved, reported, or rumored physical characteristics and behaviors that may have a kernel of legitimacy in real physical traits or actual ritual. Caricature itself is the art of exaggeration. This trace of reality makes negative stereotypes particularly

\textsuperscript{52} The Arab Comix Project: Arab and Arab-Diaspora Graphic Fiction. Humboldt State University (2019).
\textsuperscript{53} Claude Beylie. “La bande dessinée est-elle un art?” \textit{Lettres et Médecins}, literary supplement \textit{La Vie médicale} (March 1964).

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effective and difficult to combat, since they appear to be accurate in the opinion of those who hold them. “American cartoonists used racial and ethnic stereotypes as soon as large numbers of non-Anglo-Saxon Protestants began arriving in America in the 1840s. First to be lampooned were the Irish; then, as the abolitionist movement progressed, African Americans; next came the Jews, Germans, and Chinese; and finally, by the turn of the century, the Italians.”55 In a sense, all fictional characters are stereotypes because a single character cannot possibly capture the variability of individuals within a group identity.

The history of animation begins with the flickering light from fire on paleolithic cave painting.56, 57, 58 This invokes Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave”.

55 “Stereotypes in Cartoons”. History of Teaching Institute: Ohio State University: https://hti.osu.edu/opper/stereotypes
56 Thomas, Bob (1958). Walt Disney, the Art of Animation: The Story of the Disney Studio Contribution to a New Art, Walt Disney Studios. Simon and Schuster.

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The Allegory of the Cave represents Plato’s beliefs that the world revealed by our senses is not the real world but only a poor copy of it, and that the real world can only be attained intellectually; his idea that knowledge cannot be transferred from teacher to student, but rather that education consists in directing student’s minds toward what is real and important and allowing them to apprehend it for themselves; his faith that the universe ultimately is good;

Figure 10. “Allegory of The Cave” © Churchill Films 1973
his conviction that enlightened individuals have an obligation to the rest of society, and that a
good society must be one in which the truly wise (the Philosopher-King) are the rulers.

In it, the cave represents our physical reality as well as ignorance, as those in the cave
accept what they see at face value. Ignorance is further represented by the darkness that
engulfs them because they cannot know the true objects that form the shadows, leading them
to believe the shadows are the true forms of the objects. The chains that prevent the prisoners
from leaving the cave represent that they are trapped in ignorance, as the chains are stopping
them from learning the truth. The shadows cast on the walls of the cave represent the
superficial truth, which is the illusion that the prisoners see in the cave. The freed prisoner
represents those who understand that the physical world is only a shadow of the truth, and the
sun that is glaring the eyes of the prisoners represents the higher truth of ideas. The light
further represents wisdom, as even the paltry light that makes it into the cave allows the
prisoners to know shapes.59

The freed prisoner might either join the ranks of the puppeteers to communicate “the
truth” in a way the prisoners understand, risk his life to drag the prisoners outside against their
will, try to overthrow the system by extinguishing the fire or removing the other puppeteers, or
return outside to live out his life, etc.

In contrast to the philosophy of communicating reality in the allegory of the cave, the
religious perspective asserts that its teachings, its texts, offer the most approximate way of

Modern animation can trace its origins to puppetry as a nascent form of 2D and 3D animation. Shadow puppetry emerged in India in the first millennium BCE and spread across Asia and the Middle East between the 7th and 9th century, developing traditions that are still practiced today especially in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, China, India, Turkey, and Greece.63, 64

Shadow puppet theater likely came into vogue in the Ottoman Empire after the Mongol invasions in the 14th century. After the Mongols took over Baghdad in 1258, and at the beginning of the so-called "decadent epoch", Iraqi doctor and poet Shams Eddine Mohammed Ibn Daniel el-Moussili (1238-1310), settled in Cairo and wrote the three oldest preserved Arabic scripts of the shadow theatre tradition. The first play, “Tayf elKkhayal” (“The Shadow Spirit”), a farce filled with provocative irreverence. Emir Wissal requests the assistance of a matchmaker

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Commented [17]: Add The history of animation begins with the flickering light from fire on cave drawings. Then Plato’s allegory of the Cave.

Plato begins by having Socrates ask Glaucon to imagine a cave where people have been imprisoned from childhood, but not from birth. These prisoners are chained so that their legs and necks are fixed, forcing them to gaze at the wall in front of them and not to look around at the cave, each other, or themselves (514a-b). Behind the prisoners is a fire, and between the fire and the prisoners is a raised walkway with a low wall, behind which people walk carrying objects or puppets "of men and other living things" (514b). The people walk behind the wall so their bodies do not cast shadows for the prisoners to see, but the objects they carry do ("just as puppet showmen have screens in front of them at which they work their puppets") (514a). The prisoners cannot see any of what is happening behind them, they are only able to see the shadows cast upon the cave wall in front of them. The sounds of the people talking echo off the walls, and the prisoners believe these sounds come from the shadows (514c). Socrates suggests that the shadows are reality for the prisoners because they have never seen anything else, they do not realize that what they see are shadows of objects in front of a fire, much less that these objects are inspired by real things outside the cave which they do not see (514b-515a).

The fire, or human-made light, and the puppets, used to make shadows, are done by the artists. Plato, however, indicates that the fire is also the political doctrine that is taught in a nation state. The artists use light and shadows to teach the dominant doctrines of a time and place.

Also, few humans will ever escape the cave. This is not some easy task, and only a true philosopher, with decades of preparation, would be able to leave the cave, up the steep incline. Most humans will live at the bottom of the cave, and a small few will be the major artists that project the shadows with the use of human-made light. Departure from the cave[edit]

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60 Psalm 33:9

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to find himself a wife. On the day of the wedding, he lifts the veil of his future wife and discovers that she is extremely ugly. This is followed by the death of the matchmaker and the emir’s repentance that takes him to Mecca to gain forgiveness for his sins. The story addresses with the country’s political situation. Ibn Daniel seems to praise the laws adopted by Sultan Zaher Bibars against debauchery but really rails against the Mamluk Sultanate, mocking its reforms.65

The second play, “Ajib wa Qharib” ("Strange and Bizarre"), is a drama which depicts the life of circus performers of the Egyptian souks during the Mamluk period.66

The third play, “El Moutayyam” (“The Lovelorn”) a romance uninhibited by the mores of its time about a bashful lover who’ll do anything to satisfy his beloved. The play ends with a big party where each guest relates personal experiences and erotic pleasures, when suddenly the King of Death appears to take the lover who begs for mercy and asks to travel to Mecca to repent his sins.67

Historian Ibn Ayass, narrates in his work, Badai’ at Zouhour, that Sultan Selim watched a shadow play depicting the assassination of the deposed Mamluk Sultan at the Rawda Palace in

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Bahrain. After the performance, Sultan Selim told the puppeteer: "when we go to Istanbul, you shall come with us so my son can watch and enjoy your show".  

After Salah ad-Din al Ayyubi toppled down the Fatimids in Egypt in 1171, he attended a shadow play with his vizier Al Qadi Al Fadhel. At the time, banning Shadow Theater was being considered for religious reasons. After the show, the king asked Al Qadi what he thought. The vizier replied, "I saw a great preach, I saw states falling and others rising".  

In the 11th century Sunni Jurist and Poet of Andalusia, Ibn Hazm, (994-1064) likened life to a shadow play, on account of its temporality. Philosopher, Lecturer, and Theologian Abu

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68 Ibn Ayass, Badai‘ az Zouhour, the vents of 923 H., (vol. 3 p. 125 of the Arabic edition).
69 Alau’ddin Ghazouli, Matali al Boudour wa Manazil as Sourour (vol. 1 p. 78 of the Arabic edition).
Hamid Al Ghazali (1059-1111) famously illustrated Aristotle’s concept of the “Prime Mover” or “Uncaused Cause” referring to the origination of the universe, by using the example of a puppet master working behind the screen.\textsuperscript{71, 72, 73}

The oldest indication of shadow theater in the Arab World goes back to Imam Shafi’i (Gaza 767-820) in a poem cited by Mohammad Khalil Al Moradi (1871): “This world for me is a shadow play moved by The Merciful Lord”\textsuperscript{74}.

\textsuperscript{72} Al Ghazali, Ihya’ Ulum ad Din (vol. 4 p. 122 of the Arabic edition).
\textsuperscript{73} Abu al Alaa al Maarri, Al Louzoumiyyat aw Louzoum ma la Yalzom, (p. 104 of the Arabic edition).
\textsuperscript{74} Al Muradi, Silk ad Durar (vol. 1 p. 132 of the Arabic edition).
The religious dimension

During the Fatimid rule, the caliph allowed all forms of art to develop and prosper. This led to the reappearance of old traditions in the conquered states, notably Egypt, like the traditions of deriving spiritual value from media such as Shadow Puppetry (a characteristic of the original shadow art of East Asia). 75

The puppet represents this philosophy of faith in which all creatures are puppets in hands of the Mighty Creator. [The puppets of the shadow theater are a symbolic reflection of whom they represent without being a traditional direct personification of the created human appearance as personification is prohibited as the artist might be in doubt that he is able to insufflate a soul in it.] Metin And says that the deformation of the characters in shadow theater is related to the prohibition on aniconism. 76 For these reasons, maybe, Shadow Theater was more accepted than other artistic forms such as painting and acting since it didn’t rely on depicting all the human body directly but through deformed shadow reflection.


Commented [20]: Maybe somewhere add the barriers of living representation have been broken (maybe example the death of the Saudi prince resulting from a feud after the creation of one of the first broadcasting service?)
In Sufism and other mysticism such as Suhrawardi, light and shadow are an abstract representation of two opposite worlds, the spiritual world facing the real concrete world.\textsuperscript{77} Light and darkness are therefore two symbols: a symbol of happiness in the spiritual realm and a symbol of misery in the “evanescent” world.\textsuperscript{78}

These ideas influenced historical conditions during which Shadow Theater entered the Islamic world, when Sufis movements and ideas were on the rise in times of gloomy social and political conditions.

\textsuperscript{77} Hussein Mroueh, An Nazaat al Madiyya fi al Falsafa al Arabiya al Islamiyya.
\textsuperscript{78} Saad Saleh: Traditions of popular comedy. Ministry of Culture, Cairo 1994., p. 78
Most of the shadow puppets plays in Egypt during the Mamluk period have the traditional ending: the repentance of the characters and their pilgrimage to Mecca to do Hajj and ask for forgiveness.

The artistic styles of the puppets:

Arabic shadow theater can be classified into four styles: The Mamluk style, the Ottoman representative style, the Arabic popular drawing style and, the primitive style.

The Ottoman style:

According to the Turkish scholar “Metin And”, shadow theater moved to Turkey from Egypt in the 16th century after Sultan Selim 1st conquered Egypt in 1517 and then evolved to the modern form known as “Karagöz” (meaning “blackeye” in Turkish).\(^79\),\(^80\)

Two legends explain the origins of Karagöz. The first tells that in 8th century Kufa (Modern Iraq), a Jew by the name of Batruni put up a shadow show imitating of the Arabian king Qail. The shadow show was condemned as sorcery and was Batruni put to death. The second legend has it that Karagoz and Hacivat were two quarrelling workmen in the Ottoman times, engaged in building a mosque or a in the city of Busra. Their constant bickering was so amusing that other workers would stop to listen. These delays made the sultan lose his temper. He ordered the execution of Karagöz and Hacivat. However, soon after their execution, along with the other workmen, the sultan was overcome with regret. A Sufi courtier called Shiek

Kushteri, came to provide comfort resurrected Karagoz and Hacivat using his turban to create a curtain and his shoes to form the shadow puppet impressions of Karagoz and Hacivat.81

Karagoz represents the illiterate but straightforward public, whereas Hacivat belongs to the educated class, speaking Ottoman Turkish and using a poetical and literary language. Though Karagoz always outdoes Hacivat’s superior education with his “native wit,” he is also impulsive, and his never-ending deluge of get-rich-quick schemes always results in failure.

Hacivat continually attempts to “domesticate” Karagoz, but never makes progress. Hacivat emphasizes the upper body with his refined manners and aloof disposition, while Karagoz is more representational of “the lower body with eating, cursing, defecation and the

phallus." Other characters in the plays are different, often stereotyped ethnic characters living under Ottoman domain such as Armenians, Albanians, Greeks, Jews, and Arabs. Karagöz–Hacivat plays have been especially associated with the Ramadan in Turkey.

Karagöz became an overtly politicized and sexually explicit genre that represented the voice of the lower class until Government censorship intervened in the late nineteenth century. As a result, Karagöz retained subversive traits, but resorted to innuendo rather than direct attacks.

Karagöz theatre spread throughout the Ottoman Empire, where the characters were modified to local cultures and stereotypes but often retained the period setting in the late years of the Ottoman Empire. The shadow theaters in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine were the ones mostly influenced by Ottoman style shadow puppetry.

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Throughout the life of Karagöz theatre, Jews played a disproportionate role and were active contributors of creativity and culture wherever they were permitted to do so wherever they wandered. However, just as Jews were obligated to wear designated garments, as were other dhimmi to distinguish themselves from Muslims and forbidden from public displays of their faith, these Jewish puppeteers were forbidden from influencing the public with their culture and perspective. However, the Jews would perform the story of Esther in private community shadow plays and incorporated the mythic Wawaq tree – an image depicting the hanging of Hayman and his sons from *Magilat Esther* – into traditional Karagöz theatre background features.

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Subject of puppet plays in different Arab countries

Egypt was among the most fertile lands for shadow theater. Among the famous play scripts were:

*The Old Lighthouse (Al manar al qadeem)*, written by several authors over time, tells of battles during the crusades and the lighthouse of Alexandria. All the text is a rhymed dialogue between two characters Al Haziq and Al Rakhim (somehow, like Karagöz theatre) the first is a coward and the second tries to convince him to support the war effort. It is said that Salah ad Din enjoyed this play.

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87 KAHLE, PAUL ERNST (1875–1965), Orientalist, scholar, and minister
The New Lighthouse (Al manar al hadeeth), starring the same two characters, Al Haziq and Al Rakhim, in different events, starting with lazy carpenters, who are late in building the battleships, unaware of the threat of the Franks, who soon arrive and destroy all the battleships. The situation is saved by “Al-Ghorab Al-Mansoor” (The victorious crow) who destroys all the enemy’s battleships.
The Crocodile tells the story of Zaberkash the farmer who laments over his bad luck. He is called by a sheikh to become a fisherman, but he is swallowed by a crocodile and then everybody gathers to save him.

Alam and Taadeer tells the love story between a Muslim young man Taadir and the daughter of a Christian monk Alam, after many adventures, she surrenders to his love, converts to Islam and they go to Mecca for Hajj.
The play of The spirit of Shadow (Tayf al khayal):

The most important, original play-scripts for the shadow puppet plays – the trilogy of Shamseddine Ibn Danial al Mosuli (1238-1310), who fled Mosul (Iraq) to Egypt during the 13th century Mongol invasions (1258). These are considered as the oldest play-scripts in Arabic.
Volume I is built on a series of misunderstandings, telling the story of prince “Wisal”, who searches for a bride with the help of a wicked matchmaker. She finds him a bride and once married he discovers that his wife is extremely ugly, and the matchmaker is killed. The plot is filled with references to the political situation in the country. It apparently praises the measures and hard sanctions imposed by Baibars, the reigning sultan at the time, against whom he accused of corruption under the pretext of maintaining security against a foreign enemy. Ibn Danial criticized these reforms, he presents a play highly obscene full of homosexuality.

The second text is “Ajeeb wa Ghareeb”, is radically different, it is a circus like show, composed of several acts, juggling, magic, animal taming and other performances uniquely depicting popular scenes in Egyptian marketplaces under the rule of the Mamluk. Ibn Danial ends this second play by the repenting characters journey to Mecca as in the first one.

The third play, “Al Mutayyam wa ad Da’i al Yatim” (The infatuated and the lost orphan), is dissolute far beyond the limits allowed in that period. It tells the story of the infatuated who does all he can to please his lover including cockfights, ram fights and bullfights, until the end of the play where there is a ceremony with all kinds of sexual perversions, then at a certain moment a deafening sound is heard, the angel of death appears, he has come to take the infatuated.

At the end of all three plays, the protagonist travels to Mecca to repent.

Syria:
Despite several indications to the presence of Shadow Theater in the 13th and the 15th century, it is clear that the main period of prosperity of this art was in the 19th century, in Damascus, Aleppo and along the coastline, as a result of the influence of the Turkish Karagoz Theater, merging with the Levantine Hakawati tradition to address the problems of everyday life in Syria and was also used as a satire to instigate the people against the Turks and preservation of Arab culture. 88

Shadow Theatre at Azem Museum, in Damascus.

88 The Azem Palace museum in Damascus.
Syrian Karagöz and Hacivat.

People who frequented coffee shops waited for what was called “chapters of war”, stories presented after the Karagoz show, about historic events such as the Persian and Ghassanids wars, featuring public figures such as Sayf bin zi Yazan and Antara bin Shaddad, and characters from legends and popular tales such as Fadous Abu as Sabeh Rous (The seven headed Fadous) including djinn, monsters, and magic.89

Lebanon:

Shadow theater in Lebanon and Palestine is related to the Syrian tradition because of the geographical interconnection and the sociopolitical unity at that time. Shadow theater used

89 Faruk Saad, p. 741.
to show in coffee shops in across the Middle East and North Africa. Seven texts were widely shown during that period: The beggars, Ifranjun, The Afiouni, The Hamam, The evening, The wooden logs, Amon.

Algeria:

The Algerian shadow Theater used Karagoz (without the accompanying character Iwaz) to resist French occupation such as a scene where a giant Karagoz would vanquish French colonial forces with his penis which contributed to the French prohibition of shadow plays in Algeria. The published texts include Karagöz and the French troupe, The devil in French clothes, The love affairs of Karagöz, and Karagoz varieties inspired by Thousand and one nights.

In the 1920s and 30s, Karagöz came into direct competition with the global export of animated cartoons like Mickey Mouse. During the Famous puppeteers, Sefa and Irfan, were...

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90 Enno Litman.
91 Puckler, 1835, Algiers.

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among those saying, "Karagöz must be modernized," and Sefa asserted that Karagöz had to be like "the newest American comic, ‘Mickey’". Hikmet Feridun, a prominent journalist who shared the government’s ideology, claimed that Karagöz would surpass Mickey Mouse if the theatre could reflect the innovations of the age. "Think for a while how animated pictures, called Mickey, have the world eating out of their hands. But Mickey’s many followers are children, whereas Karagöz’s witty remarks give adults fun as well as children. [Mickey Mouse] Films are like snacks, ordinary and easy to get, whereas Karagöz is a treasure, which can never be found anywhere else for adults and children".92

**Turkish Gostermalik (Turkish Shadowplay)**

**Characters of Arabic popular drawing style:**

At the end of the 19th century, the popular drawing style for characters prevailed, especially in Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine. The popular style is that found in illustrations tattooed on human skin, on paper, on textile, on certain tools or on walls. These drawings usually do not respect the anatomic proportions of the human body or the proportions of other objects, there is also no respect whatsoever of perspective rules. This style adapted to each country according to the local taste, hence the difference between the forms of the characters across the Arab countries from Syria to Algeria.

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Characters of primitive or particular style:
The Libyan and Tunisian shadow characters were very simple, without colors or perforations.

Algerian characters were influenced by the paper cutting art and Parisian shadow puppet characters of the 19th century. It is not unlikely that Algerian puppeteers have seen French puppet shows, because of the intensive influence of the French colonial culture on the Algerian society.

Today traditional shadow theater is completely extinct in many countries, such as Lebanon, Palestine and Algeria and Syria. There were no initiatives in these countries to revive this art, except through the efforts of few individuals who were unable spread their ideas.

The first [preserved] animated feature film was “The Adventures of Prince Achmed” (1926), which borrowed from both the Turkish shadow puppet tradition and Scheherazade’s One Thousand and One Nights.
The theatre Al-Kasaba was the first to use puppets in its performances for children. The first puppets were made by the Russian-born Israeli puppeteers Simion Golik and Vadim Dikerman who taught manipulation techniques to the actors of the Al-Kasaba theatre. Most of the puppets were glove or rod puppet figures. The puppet performance Little Red Riding Hood show debuted at Al-Kasaba in 1995.

Abdul Salam Abdo, from the Palestinian National Theatre, is regarded among the foremost puppet artists in Palestine. He has produced his own plays that have toured Palestine, Arab countries, and international festivals.

Nidal Al-Khateeb became the second Palestinian to create puppet theatre. Nidal Khatib started his journey in a prison cell. In 1982, Khatib was jailed in Israel for six months for distributing posters during Land Day. There he met his fellow detainees, who became part of the “theatre” they all created. They turned the cell into a stage and used the tools available to

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them as props. After joining the *Hakawati Theatre* in Jerusalem, he founded the Al-Tantoura puppet theatre troupe in Hebron in 1995.

![Nidal Al-Khateeb](image)

He was put in a prison called “Ansar-3” again for six months for his activism during the 1st intifada in 1998, where he produced his next play “Ansar-3” expressing his experience in prison. His play “Dreams of Halima”, intended for adolescents and their parents, addresses child marriage, and was produced in association with several pro-women organizations. “*Butto in Jerusalem*” tells the story of a youth and his grandfather who are prevented from going to Jerusalem by the Israeli army.
Khatib, his wife Maysoun, and their children all play integral roles in his productions. The couple was awarded the Palestine Award for Excellence and Creativity in 2010.

In 2012, the couple produced a shadow play, “The Inferno of the Shadow”, addressing violence against women and their right to inheritance.93

Mahmoud Al-Hourani is a British-Palestinian actor and playwright, and a graduate of the Royal Central London School of Speech and Drama. He is the director and founder of the Arab Puppet Theatre Foundation since 2008 with a mission to revive and develop the use of puppet theatre in the Arab world, producing dozens of plays including “One Thousand and One Titans”, addressing the plight of refugees together with Palestinian Puppeteer, Rakan Abdolrahman Al-Khali.94, 95

Hooda Shawa is a Kuwaiti-Palestinian author of award-winning popular children’s books including “The Birds’ Journey to Mount Qaf” and “Elephant’s Journey” ("Rihla Fil"), and “My


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Palestinian Grandmother", she founded [TAQA Productions Company in Kuwait] which has produced several films, operettas, and puppet shows including:

The Gift (2017) – A shadow play written by Hooda Shawa, directed by Mahmoud Hourani, based on a true story set during the 8th century BCE in the palace of Abbasid Caliph Harun Al-Rashid, who hosts emissaries sent by Emperor Charlemagne. As the foreign dignitaries prepare for their long journey back home, the Caliph offers an array of lavish gifts to be sent along, including an albino elephant named Abou Al-Abbas, raising the question: “Had the Caliph heard of the German proverb ‘small gifts preserve friendships’?”.

Julnar and the Firebird (2019) – a puppet show presented by TAQA Productions, written by Hooda Shawa and Dr. Nabil Bahgat. From the balcony of the Palace of Wonders in the island of Zanzibar off the coast of East Africa, Princess Julnar watches sailing wooden ships arrive from Kuwait. Julnar’s dreams of seafaring come true when she sets sail on a quest to find a cure for her friend the Firebird, who sheds his beautiful feathers when afraid.96

96 https://www.jacc-kw.com/full-season-calendar/

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“Duma Fe Darna” (“Puppet show in Our Home”) Series (2020) – a Puppets series produced by TAQA Productions and Fuse Media Production that introduces children to famous Arab figures and teaches them how to make their own puppets, sponsored by Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, written by Hooda Shawa, directed by Ahmad Talal.

Hossam Zuheika (b.1962) is a puppet maker and performer who trained at the Palestine National Theatre and created several shows including “Ass Kicks Asses” and “The Mermaid”.


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The Festival of Puppetry organized by the Palestinian National Theatre in Jerusalem began in 1989. It is the only international festival of puppet theatre in the Palestinian territory, but being in Jerusalem, the participation of companies from the West Bank and Gaza has been difficult because of travel restrictions imposed on the territories by Israeli military authorities, but in 2011 the festival was held in Nablus, Jerusalem, and Ramallah to accommodate audiences in different areas.

Puppetry has played an important role in communications especially for “the Arab street” because it is easier to avoid censorship than liv-action since it is perceived as less real, less threatening and because puppets can be made from practically anything, socks, plastic bottles, paper, and glue to provide entertainment and communicate ideas and values for communities that lack resources.

*El Leila El Kebira* (الليلة الكبيرة) (*The Grand Night or The Big Night*) is a 1961 Egyptian puppet-operetta that was written by poet Salah Jahin with the music composed by Sayed Mekawy. The operetta describes the celebration of the last night of the mould, a festival celebrating the Prophet Mohamed’s birthday, through a playful, colorful and musically lively display of the activities done in an Egyptian village including scenes from the carnival and the circus including food stall vendors, a fortune teller, hummus, circus performers and belly dancers, with

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catchy Egyptian folk songs and rhythms. Approximately 40-minutes in length, it continues to make an impression on Egyptian-Muslim popular culture across the region. In 2011 Jordan-based animation studio “Kharabeesh” adapted it into an animated short.

Figure 13. El Leila Kabira © 2002 Kharabeesh 2011

Egyptian animation studio, “Giraffics” has adapted El Leila El Kebira into a full-length animated feature film for release in 2022. Giraffics’ adaptation revolves around a little girl, Laila, and her passion for her grandfather’s stories. After being bullied by her schoolmates, Laila


escapes to a fictional world through the Bioscope, where she finds herself surrounded by her favorite characters from “The Grand Night”, but she will have to confront a villain, Ommena El Ghoula, to save her story and return to her home.102

There is an interesting history of government sponsorship and censorship in film, specifically cartoons, in both democratic and authoritarian countries.

During World War II, Private Snafu (a military slang acronym SNAFU, “Situation Normal: All F-ed Up”) was a series of humorous instructional adult animated shorts, produced between


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1943 and 1945 under Leon Schlesinger’s Warner Bros. which outbid Disney for the contract.\textsuperscript{103, 104, 105}

Figure 9. Private Snafu

The Cold War was a war of ideologies. Each side relied heavily on the ideological unity of its people, often employing the power of the visual arts — graphic design, animation, illustration — to drive its message home.\textsuperscript{104}

Japanese Anime, Manga, and Video Games characters are globally ubiquitous. Japan wields these cultural exports for soft power influence.\textsuperscript{107}

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\textsuperscript{104} WWII PRIVATE SNAFU Cartoons: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XnrgtEzbiOE


\textsuperscript{106} Maria Popova. “Animated Soviet Propaganda: What warthogs and vultures have to do with the most critical polarization in world politics”. \textit{Brain Pickings} (2011).


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Similarly, webtoons have emerged as a popular cultural export in Korea as they have been adapted to film and television.108, 109

The Journey (2021) was a joint feature animation production between Japanese anime studio Toei Animation and Saudi animation studio Manga Productions, a subsidiary of the MISK Foundation, based on an epic tale inspired by the history and culture of the Arabian Peninsula.
with the distinctive anime animation style. Chief advisor of Toei Animation and an executive producer on the project, Shimizu Shinji stated that, it was “a great challenge for us as Japanese from the Far East to share in the history of ancient Arabia, which has completely different customs and cultures from ours.” But “with the supervision and assistance of the Saudi team, we were able to collect the materials and ideas needed to prepare this film.”¹¹⁰ Through this cross-cultural collaboration, under government sponsorship and supervision, the venture was able to build bonds between the two disparate nations.

In the 1980s, Ireland invested the biggest grant it had ever offered a non-manufacturing company to former Disney animator Don Bluth to jumpstart its animation industry.¹¹¹ Countries

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¹¹¹ Alex Dudok De Wit. “Don Bluth’s Invasion of Ireland: A New Podcast Reveals the Untold Story.” Cartoon Brew (2020).

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around the world subsidize animation production as a means of promoting cultural heritage and language preservation, especially for the next generation.112, 113

The history of American comics shows the transformation of popular culture between conservative and progressive perspectives of realism and idealism. The Golden Age of Comic (1930s to early-1950s) saw the rise of modern archetypal heroes. The Silver Age of Comics (1956 to circa 1970), saw the three-dimensionality of heroes, focusing on the person behind the mask with their flaws and anxieties. In the 1960s artists such as Robert Crumb and Ralph Bakshi pioneered “underground comix”, creating comics and animation that delved into graphic subject matter banned by the 1954 Code of NGO Comics Authority, which had been created to monitor moral guidelines around such subjects as violence, sex, and drugs in comics. In the 1970s through the 2000s independent publishers proliferated and adult themes became mainstream, pioneered by creators such as Alan Moore. From the mid-2010s onward, comics, literature, and pop-culture of all kinds feature more diverse identity representation both on and behind the page, exhibiting intersectional, social activist, post-modernist qualities, including the replacement of traditional heroes with new identities.114 Together, these comics, especially those brought to the big screen, have shaped and reflected the zeitgeist of American idealism and realism for decades, evolving into modern mythology.

113 Alex Dudok De Wit. “Animation Is Key to The BBC’s Efforts To Preserve An Endangered Language”. Cartoon Brew (2021).

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"Pictures speak a thousand words, animations speak a thousand pictures." Adding sound, music, and animation amplifies audience engagement. Animated movies and series have made and continue to make significant impressions on young people. Disney movies such as *Aladdin*, *Mulan*, *Moana*, and *Coco* leave significant impressions of cultural identity. Such widely distributed, resource-intensive, cross-cultural products demand responsibility and inclusivity in how they portray the societies they represent.\(^{115,116}\)

### A Comparative Semitic and Middle Eastern History of Cartoons

Arab cartoonists often consider the origins of comics to be traced back to Egyptian hieroglyphics and the 13\(^{th}\) century illustrated stories of *Maqāmāt* and *Kalīla wa-Dīmna*,

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117 Richard Gray. "There’s a good chance that some of your beliefs have been influenced by decades of animated movies." *BBC* (2019).

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underlining the traditional Arab roots of the medium.118

The Maqâmât emerged as a major Arabic literary form in the 10th century, beginning with Maqamat Badi' az-Zaman al-Hamadhani – a series of anecdotes of social satire written and the narrative concerns the travels of a middle-aged man as he uses his charm and eloquence to swindle his way across the Arabic world. Maqâmât grew from the literary tradition of adab, a word that refers to both “literature” and “etiquette” revealing the nature of these stories to educate the public on proper behavior and worldview, based on Islamic principles but also with many influences from cultures and religions across the known world, which developed during the height of Abbasid culture in the 9th century and continued through the Middle Ages in the Islamic world. In 1237, Iraqi Muslim painter, Yahya ibn Mahmud al-Wasiti, created 96 illustrations for the legendary Maqâmât of Iraqi poet and scholar al-Hariri of Basra.119 Maqâmâ, revealing glimpses into and commentaries on 13th-century Islâmic life with expressive figures, and vivid but controlled colors. Al-Wasiti’s illustrations, which are among the finest examples of a style used in the 13th-century, served as an inspiration for the modern Baghdad art movement in the 20th-century, which blended Turkish art and native Christian


1 Syncretism – The combining of different beliefs, while blending practices of various schools of thought. Syncretism involves the merging or assimilation of several originally discrete traditions, especially in theology and mythology, asserting an underlying unity and allowing for an inclusive approach to other faiths, often expressed through the arts. (Source: “Syncretism”. Encyclopædia Britannica (1911))


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(probably Jacobite or Syriac Miaphysite) painting in a lively Islamic syncretism. Sefer Tahkemoni, imitated the structure of al-Hamadani and al-Hariri, but his work also reflects his Jewish identity in a society that was in transition, shifting from al-Andalus to Christian Iberia.

The illustrated Maqamat influenced the aesthetics of the Turkish Shadow Puppet Theatre, shown through the emphasis of the outline, the dramatic behavior and mobile gestures of figures, the strong contrast between figures and the background, and the tendency of the figures being present in an unregulated setting.120

The Maqamat illustrations have stylistic characteristics of other religions such as Christianity and Judaism, such as the use of gold circles behind the heads of characters to denote authority traditionally used in Christian iconography to denote holiness, as well as Jewish gravestones.121

The Al-Hariri *Maqāmāt* has been regarded as the Arabic greatest literary treasure after the Qur’an.\(^\text{122}\)

\[\begin{figure}[h]
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Kalila wa-Dimna is a book containing a collection of didactic fables, originating from the Sanskrit text “Pañcatantra”, which is said to have been written by Indian scholar Bedba for Debshleem, the king of India. Kalila and Dimna, translated into Arabic by Persian Muslim convert, Abdullah Ibn al Muqaffa’ in the Abbasid age circa 750 A.D., is considered a masterpiece of Arabic and world literature, still a tenant of Arab pop-culture today, taught in Arab schools and Arabic classes across the world, and translated into over 100 languages. Its religious and
social context changed from Hinduism via Zoroastrianism to Islam. It also is considered the first secular fiction in the Arabic language.  

The Al Jazeera Children’s Channel adapted the famous Indian tale of “Kalila and Dimna” as an animated, educational series for children, as a celebration of the channel’s first anniversary in 2006.

An Arabic drawing from the book “Kalīla wa-Dīmna” from 1220 AD, depicting the jackal characters, “Kalila” and “Dimna”.

Commented [39]: Could add something about during the golden age of Islam, Arabic literature - with the exception of Chinese literature - has the largest medieval corpus of humorous short prose in the world. In this way, the Arabic adab literature, as the central hub for such texts, can be assigned an appropriate status in the network of complex cultural interrelationships.  

125 Nadia Qaraqa. “5 Arabic Cartoons to Laugh Your Way Through Language Learning.” FluentU
126 http://www.arabic-toons.com/kalelah-wa-demnah-1464254754-179.html#sets

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In modernity, the appearance of comics in the Arab world is linked to the printing of children’s magazines. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, some books began to appear containing widely illustrated stories and with educational intentions that were circulated in school environments. The first of these was the Egyptian “Rawdat al-Madāris” (“The school garden”), published by the minister of education, ‘Alī Mubārakin, 1870. The concept of comics at the time relegated the drawing to a supporting role and to a simple learning facilitation tool. Other examples of these magazines are Samīr as-ṣaǧīr (“Little Samīr”, 1877), al-Madrasa (“The school”, 1893) and at-Tilmīḏ (“The pupil”, 1893), from whose titles it is clear the didactic and scholastic nature.

Arab political cartoons began in 1880s Cairo with Yaqub Sanu, whose drawings and text lambasted Egypt’s then viceroy, Ismail Pasha. Sanu established the first theatre in Egypt in 1870 where he presented 26 plays and published a magazine called “Abu Nadhara” meaning “Father of Glasses” which became his nickname. Sanu was an Egyptian Jew who was born in Cairo in 1839. His father worked for Prince Yaken, the grandson of Muhammad Ali Pasha, Khedive of Egypt and Sudan. When Yaqub was thirteen he wrote an Arabic poem and recited it in front of the prince who was fascinated by the young boy’s talents. The prince later sent him to be educated in Livorno, Italy in 1853, where he studied Arts and Literature. When he returned to Egypt in 1855, he worked as a tutor for the prince’s twelve children before he

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became a teacher in the Arts and Crafts School in Cairo. Sanu was very successful until his activities, namely his anti-establishment, anti-imperial positions, began to anger the royal family of Egypt, who shut down his magazine and theater and exiled him from Egypt. Sanu fled to Paris where he died in 1912.128, 129, 130

Figure 17. Cartoon from *Abu Nalhara Magazine* by Yaqub Sanu.

130 The entire digital collection of Sanu’s satirical newspapers is available at kic-sv016.kjc.uni-heidelberg.de:8080/exist/apps/naddara/index.html/.
Al-Awd (The Boys), published in 1922, fully embodied comics style. “As was common for comics from 1920 to 1950, the content in “Al-Awd” was created not as propaganda but rather simply to entertain children”.  

Figure 18. “Al-Awd”, Dar al-Lata’if, Egypt (1923–1932).


Satiric imagery in the Interwar Egyptian press (1919-1936) reflects the interactions between the semi-colonial hegemony and the emerging Egyptian national self-image, within the context of Egypt’s transition from an Ottoman vilayet to a nation-state. The satirical caricatures represented and expressed the discourses engaging with the roles of the two political cultures – Egyptian and European – contending for hegemony over the new Egyptian culture. These images mapped the changing human and urban fabric, disseminated and instilled its symbols whereby the local modern community could interpret their changing reality.¹³³

In 1925, Lebanese born stage-actress and a pioneer and patron Arab female journalism and publishing, Fatma Al Youssef founded the news magazine Rōz al-Yūsuf, which did not hesitate to use caricatures to address social issues and taboo subjects such as religion and sexuality, frequently narrating the ‘flapper-age’ of Egyptian society featuring the work of such renowned artists as Abed Al-Sami, Ahmad Hijjazi and Alexander Saroukhan. Saroukhan’s “al-Masri Effendi”, a middle-aged Egyptian “everyman” caricature wearing a Turkish fez and western suit, holding prayer beads, premiered in Ruz al-Yusuf in 1930. Effendi embodied of the feelings of the nation in the context of a modernity developing alongside a continued struggle with British colonial rule. Effendi also became a site of contestation, over the supposed Egyptian character and the nature of Egyptianness (relating to issues of class, race, and gender). Throughout the 1930s, al-Masri Effendi, often presented as a pitiful bureaucrat, came to be the

¹³³ Keren Zdafee. “Al-Masri Effendi: The Caricatured Image of the Reading public; A Reflection of Modern Egyptian National Identity”. The Department of Art History Faculty of the Arts, Tel-Aviv University, Israel.
reflection of the emerging Egyptian middle class or the modern Egyptian public, a sort of an “ideal citizen”, bearing the national mission. His satirical image reveals a process of cultural transfer, one that was essential to the emergence of the Egyptian middle class, while seeking to define and shape its national identity and culture.¹³⁴

Figure 20. “Al-Masri Effendi”


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Figure 18. Alexander Saroukhan, "Serry Pasha Fails in Playing the National Anthem", Source: Al Masar Gallery

Figure 19. Alexander Saroukhan, "The Arab League and Its Founding" (1945).

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In 1930s British-controlled Palestine, political cartoons were popular in major newspapers, especially among the illiterate. In this repressive atmosphere, political cartoons were useful because subversive messages could be shifted from the text to the image, where they were more likely to pass censorship regulations. 135, 136

Figure 19. Front pages of Falastin newspaper (1936).


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By the mid-century, original comics magazines like *Samir* and *Sindibâd* united the imaginations of young audiences throughout Arab countries and shaped how political tropes of pan-Arabism circulated in children’s media.

*Sindibad* (also written as Sinbad) was launched in 1952 in Egypt. The publication was distributed by the company Dar El Maaref and centered around the legendary literary character, Sinbad the Sailor from the fairy tale collection “Arabian Nights”. Hussein Amin Bicar (1913-2002) was one of Egypt’s most prominent artists of the 20th century and was the *Sindibad*’s main artist. Bicar is credited for initiating a style of journalistic art that elevated illustrating for newspapers to the level of fine art. As the first Egyptian artist to illustrate Arabic children’s books, Bicar played a major role in establishing and promoting this field, beginning with Taha Hussein’s *The Stream of Days* (1943), which was the first illustrated book to be published in Egypt.  

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Samir was a serialized comics magazine geared towards children (or more specifically their after-school allowance). Samir created a unique international conversation between comics that gave equal weight to European illustrations as it did to those from the Middle East. A single issue of Samir could take you from a local tale of Juha (a famous regional "wise-fool") to an adventure of Tintin with the flip of a page.138

Samir was co-founded in 1956, by Francophone Jewish-Egyptian artist, Bernie Aalmeon and Armenian-Egyptian artist Haroon, and was published by the government-owned Dar al-Hilal in Cairo. Samir quickly became the most popular comics magazine in the Arab world in the 1950s and 1960s. Aalmeon created the magazine’s mascot, a little Egyptian boy named “Samir”.

Samir helped educate Egypt’s young citizens in a nationalist mold. Most of these comics were based around heroic characters, both contemporary and traditional. Some of the recurring strips featured characters created from local contexts. Along with educating the youth, Samir would include vignettes and biographies of influential historical figures and events. Samir claimed in its tagline to be for an audience “8 to 88 years old”. The magazine both published translations of European and American comics such as Alice in Wonderland and
Mickey Mouse, as well as Middle Eastern work. creator Haroon created the comics “Ib Goha and Sambo”, about the adventures of an Arab boy and his Nubian sidekick, and “Basel”, about a boy scout who battles networks of smugglers to protect Egypt’s borders. His Armenian name was “Herant”, but he used the Arab name “Haroon” for his comics. Haroon was disabled and drew most comics while sitting in a wheelchair.

![Figure 23. Ib Goha and Sambo](image-url)
Aalmeon was forced to leave Egypt after President Gamal Abdel-Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal in 1956, in what became known as the “Suez Crisis”. Still, the magazine continued to run and became one of the most popular Egyptian comic magazines of the 1950s and 60s, alongside *Dunia al-Ahdath* (The World of Youth), the first Lebanese comics magazine, which was founded in 1954 by Christian poet, teacher, and children’s book author Loreen Rihany, to complement regional school curriculums.

Figure 22. *Basel* by Haroon

Commented [47]: Maybe add: Bahiga “Jija” Thomassian

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The renowned Egyptian political cartoonist, Ahmed Hijjazi, joined the magazine in 1956 creating his best-known series, "Thnabiet El Sibian" ("The Lazy Boys").

Figure 24. “Thnabiet El Khorfan”, Samir (1954).

He played a key role in reshaping the nature of the magazine in the 1950s and 1960s. Hijjazi’s work would often satirize Egyptian politics and Egypt’s class culture, he shared many of

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the basic positions of the Egyptian Left: hostility to imperialism, suspicion of international
business. But he extends his analysis to less widely accepted positions: a critique of nationalism
and even patriotism.
In her lecture, “Propaganda in Comics in the Arab World”, Animation Artist and Associate Professor of Animation at the American University of Beirut, Lina Ghaibeh, states, “since the birth of Arab nationalism and the development of the cult of the zaim, or leader, the Arab countries nationalized the media, taking over the press, the radio, the television, and

Figure 25. Other works by Ahmed Hijjazi.
publishing houses, instituting the virtual monopoly on culture. This state-centered approach to culture enforced the central themes of modern propaganda [in the Arab world] (...), nationalism, the opposition to imperialism, and of course, the Palestinian cause. Taking advantage of comics as this influential medium of communication and a powerful education tool, governments were quick to realize the additional potential of the medium in molding public opinion. So state-run magazines, were used or issued through the ministries of education, the ministries of culture, and, or institutions that were run by the political parties at the time.”

Figure 25. President of Egypt, Anwar Sadat, Samir (1965). “In order to become members of the council of the nation you need to grow up first and then the people will elect you as representatives of the workers and the farmers.”


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During this period, passionate and talented artists worked to strengthen the realm of Arabic children’s graphic literature such as Notaila Rashed. Known affectionately as “Mama Loubna”, Rashed devoted her life to the creation and promotion of children’s literature. She helmed *Samir* for decades and both authored and translated numerous beloved literary works for children and young adults alike.¹⁴⁰ Through her books and short stories, she aspired to highlight ancient Egyptian literary traditions while showcasing the rich cultural heritage of contemporary life in her home country.”¹⁴¹ She held the position of Secretary of the Child Culture Committee at the Supreme Council of Culture and was awarded the State Prize for Children’s Literature in 1978.¹⁴²

![Google Doodle: “Notaila Rashed’s 86th Birthday” by Sara Alfageeh. Copyright © Google/Sara Alfageeh, 20 September 2020.](image)

*Majid* (مَاجِد) is a popular pan-Arab comic book anthology and children’s magazine published in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates by the Abu Dhabi Media Company. It was first

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issued on 28 February 1979. The title character, Majed is a quick-witted, twelve-year-old Emirati do-gooder, who goes on many adventures in the UAE and other countries.

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One series in Majid is Kaslan Jiddan (آدج نﻼﺴﻛً, lit. Very Lazy), a story of a boy named Kaslan, who tries to act like an adult and finds himself in conflicts because of it.

Zakiyya al-Dhakiyya (Zakiyya the Clever), published by Majid since 1979, was one of the most successful comic strips read throughout the Arab world. Zakiyya, a bespectacled, western dressed girl is a source of commentary on politics, science, general knowledge, even religion. It was revolutionary in the Arab Muslim context for such a popular authority should be both female and juvenile.143

"Captain Khalfan" is a cartoon series about the adventures of three police heroes, a sharp-witted and serious leader called "Captain Khalfan", his bumbling assistant "Fahman", and diligent Lieutenant, "Maryam".144

In 2015, Majid expanded into an animation and live-action production channel, adapting many of their original characters, including Majid, Captain Khafafan, Zakiyya, and Kaslan, into modern animated programs to reflect their Emirati and Arab identity and values for a new generation.145

144 https://www.majid.ae/characters
145 Shounaz Meky. "Comic-book inspired 'Majid' channel kicks off in UAE".

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Israeli cartoons didn’t appear overtly political until the 1950s largely because the media and the government were for the most part united over the survival of the fledgling state of Israel. The two major Zionist parties before the foundation of the State of Israel published journals for children, “Davar Leyadalim” (A word for Children) sponsored by Mapai (The Workers’ party of Eretz Israel, and “Mishmar LeLeyadalim” (Guard for Children) sponsored by Mapam (The United Workers Party). Journals published after the foundation of the State of Israel, sponsored by liberal non-socialist parties, such as “Haaretz Shelano” (annexed to Haaretz) or “Maariv Lanoar” (published by Maariv) – both are private newspapers.

The comic strip “Uri Muri”, written by famous Israeli poet, playwright, Professor of Literature, and author of “A Flat for Rent” (“Dira Lehaskir”) and “Miracles and Wonders” (“Nisim VeNiflaot”), Lea Goldberg, and illustrated by Arie Navon, was published in 1936. It’s publisher Davar L’Yeledim, rationally decided that its content for children should generally be designed to teach them to be adults in Israel and explain who the nation’s greats are. The fact that this comic strip coined the Hebrew term “Sabra”, a prickly pear as a metaphor for Jews born in Israel, suggests the medium’s significant cultural influence.

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By contrast in the cactus became a Palestinian symbol of *samud* – resilience against oppression
– after Israel’s war of independence and Palestinian *Nakba*.  

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Over the years Uri embodied the young Israel, solving various problems that plagued the development of the State. He successfully deals with lack of housing and the need to teach Hebrew to the many waves of new immigrants, solves the need for more ships (by inflating toy ships to real size), solves the ventilation problems in the streets of Tel-Aviv, fights against the black market (by painting it white), and dries the swamps of the Hula Valley. In his last appearance in 1967, Uri flies to space.

“Ktina HaTazal” (Small One the Soldier) depicts the adventures of a little boy whose only wish is to grow up. Created by Navon and Goldberg, it was the first reference to the Holocaust geared toward children in Israel and revealed the lack of information about the Holocaust and the desire to fight the Nazis.
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In this story, the chick goes on a cruise with two of his duck friends. They meet armored alligators painted with swastikas, but the confused chick defeats them by wedging his oar.
between their jaws. The story echoes the battle against the Nazis but imagines a hopeful world where a small chick can vanquish the evil Nazis.

_Srulik_ is a cartoon character created in 1956 by the Israeli cartoonist Kariel Gardosh, known by his pen name Dosh. The cartoon appeared for many years in the newspaper _Maariv_ and became a symbol of what it meant to be Israeli. Srulik is a pioneering Zionist, a lover of the land of Israel and its soil, a dedicated farmer who in time of need puts on a uniform and goes out to defend the state of Israel.

Many have pointed out Srulik’s function as an antithesis of the antisemitic caricatures which appeared in _Der Stürmer_ and other European and Arab journals.\(^ {151}\)

\[\text{Figure 20. Der Stürmer (1934) Cover depicting Jews taking blood from Christian children for religious rituals.}\]


In contrast the weak or cunning Jewish stereotype propagated by Joseph Goebbels, Dosh — a Holocaust survivor — drew a proud, strong, and sympathetic Jewish character with a little chutzpah. Gardosh writes, “There can be no doubt, that the brutal and systematic dehumanization of the Jew in caricatures played an important role in creating the psychological conditions for their annihilation.” Art historian Maya Balakirsky Katz concludes that, understanding the potential of cartoons to incite hatred and violence, early Israeli cartoonists avoided overtly racist depictions of Israel’s military enemies. Additionally, Katz states, “like all journalists working during a period of mutual cooperation between the government and the Hebrew press, Gardosh was challenged to effect change on the inside without compromising national security from the outside.”

Gidi Gezer (carrot-top Gidi) was a weekly comic series first published in 1953 about a boy who serves in the Palmach — a pre-IDF Jewish defense force — during the 1948 Israeli War of Independence and 1956 Suez War, fighting British and Arab soldiers using “super-hero” gifts that he gains from eating carrots.

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Over the years additional stories from this series were published including “The Convoy Continues on its Way”, where Gidi Gezer defends the convoys that carried food and supplies to a besieged Jerusalem and he fights the Arab soldiers in the war of Independence; “A Special Assignment in the Desert” where Gidi fights the Egyptians in the desert front of the war of Independence, trying to recruit the support of the Bedouins; “The Sad Class” – a story of Gidi and his sad group of classmates disappointed because they were not assigned the most dangerous mission in the battle. Lastly there was “On the Trail of El Natur”, where during the Suez crisis Gidi sets out for Gaza to pay back a debt to an Arab who Gidi’s father owes him money.154

Figure 21. “Gidi Gezer”. Written by Yaacov Ashman, Illustrated by Elisheva Nadal. Haaretz Shelanu (1953).

“HaRaftakoitiv shel Yoav Ben Chalav” (“The Adventures of Yoav the Milk Boy”) published in 1960, was a comics series created for a milk commercial with a boy who gained supernatural

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powers by drinking “two glasses of pure milk a day” to defeat gangs of hoodlums, terrorists, and an evil sorcerer.

The first comic published in Israel was “Mickey Mahu and Eliyahu”, about a cat that accompanies a native Israeli boy on his adventures. The name and design for “Mickey Mahu” was directly borrowed from Walt Disney’s “Mickey Mouse” (1928).


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In the 1940s, illustrators began “Arabizing” western comic characters such as Mickey Mouse and Tintin for Arabic readers.\textsuperscript{156} Superman and Al-Watwat (Batman) were first published for an Arabic audience in 1964 and 1965 respectively.\textsuperscript{157}

In the Arab world in the 1960s, Mickey Mouse was featured fighting in the Arab-Israeli war with an Egyptian army to liberate Palestine in comics. In the early 2000s, Al-Aqsa TV, a Hamas-affiliated Palestinian TV station, appropriated Mickey Mouse to promote martyrdom on the children’s program, “Tomorrow’s Pioneers” (Ruwād al-Ghad).

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{figure23}
\caption{“Return to Palestine” Mickey. Dar Al-Hilal, Egypt (1964)}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{figure24}
\caption{Tomorrow’s Pioneers snapshot, Al-Aqsa TV (2007-2009)}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{figure24clip}
\caption{Tomorrow’s Pioneers clip. Al-Aqsa TV (2007-2009)}
\end{figure}


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“Depending on the character and the publishing house, not only was the content of the speech balloons translated but also the names were Arabicized, such as in the Arabic edition paid for by DC Comics in 1938, in which Clark Kent was called Nabil Fauzi and fell in love with Randa (Lois Lane). In another later version in 1980s Iraq, Superman wore a moustache." \(^{158}\) Superman was created by two Jews, Jerry Siegal and Joe Shuster. Superman is based on the biblical archetype of the story of Moses. \(^{159}\) It’s not a coincidence that Superman’s Kryptonian name, “Kal-El”, means “Voice of God” in Hebrew nor that he escaped the destruction of his home planet in a tiny rocket ship and Moses escaped slaughter by the Egyptians in a basket.

Let’s not forget Siegel and Shuster created the first Jewish Superhero “Funnyman” in 1948. \(^ {160}\) Funnyman’s alter ego, comedian “Larry Davis”, thwarted “no-goodniks” through his clownish athleticism and pranks. \(^ {161}\)

Figure 26. Funnyman, Issue #1 (1948)


Funnyman captures a zeitgeist of American Jewry as entertainers who had developed humor as a means of coping with persecution and not fitting in.

And also as a way of fighting back...

...Encouraging America to join the military front against Hitler’s Nazi Germany.¹⁶²

Jewish Americans pioneered the advent and growth of the comics industry. Many of the creators of the most famous comic books were Jewish, such as Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, and Joe Simon with Marvel heroes including Captain America, Spiderman, and X-Men and Bob Kane & Bill Finger with Batman. These Jewish-American men drew from personal experience, though their character outwardly reflected the white Anglo-Saxon dominant ethno-religious class of


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20th century America to appeal to the commercial majority and at the same time promote a western idealism that every American could admire.163

In 1978, Will Eisner popularized the term “graphic novel” with the publication of his book, A Contract with God. He was an early contributor to the study of comics as a fine art with his book Comics and Sequential Art (1985). Every year, the Eisner Award recognize achievements in comics.164

This zeitgeist of Jews in Comics was captured in Michael Chabon’s “The Amazing Adventures of Cavelier and Klay” about Joseph Kavalier, a 19-year-old Jewish refugee from Prague, and his 17-year-old cousin Sammy Clayman, who create a comic book hero at the height of World War II.165

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165 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Amazing_Adventures_of_Kavalier_%26_Clayman

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According to former curator at the Israeli Cartoon Museum, Galit Gaon, “the attitude towards comics in Israel from 1936 until the late 1960s is deprecatory or disdainful." Early Israeli disdain for comics was generally due to both the lack of need for comic heroes when the media was already populated with real national heroes and aniconism – the absence of material representations of both the natural and supernatural worlds in various cultures, part of both Islam and Judaism – and because religious communities didn’t need new stories because they already had the stories of the Torah. This lack of need for comic super heroes partially explains the short lived series of Uri Fink’s “SabraMan” (1978) and Michael Netzer’s “Uri-On” (1987), both patriotic defenders of Israel.

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It also explains the rise of the “anti-hero” in Israeli comics such as Nimrod Reshef’s Tel Aviv noire, *Uzi: An Urban Legend*, and Dorit Maya-Gur’s bestselling *Falafel Man*, about a chubby, redhead superhero who shoots sizzling falafel balls at his enemies.¹⁶⁸

Like many other elements of Israeli popular culture (like Israeli pop music) (at least until 2010), Israel’s underground comics scene got started about a decade after “comix” had made

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The influence of cartoons in Middle Eastern society can also be seen in patterns of radical reactions to them. Cartoons of the Prophet Muhammed led to 2005 Jyllands-Posten Muhammad Cartoon Crisis mass protests in Denmark and across the Muslim world, some escalating into violent riots. In 2015, cartoons depicting Mohammad led to the murder of 12 artists at the satirical weekly newspaper Charlie Hebdo in Paris.

Ali Ferzat, an award-winning Syrian cartoonist, was first published at age twelve on the front pages of newspaper al-Ayyam, shortly before it was banned by the Baath party. His 1989 exhibition of cartoons brought a threat on his life from Saddam Hussein and a ban from Iraq, Jordan, and Libya, for such controversial works as “The General and the Decorations.”

Commented [56]: Maybe add: Bosch Fawstin is an American cartoonist.[1] He was born into a Muslim family from Albania and raised in the faith before leaving it in his teens, becoming an atheist. His work is about salafism, wahabism, and the renouncing of faith. His first graphic novel, Table for One, was nominated for a Russ Manning Most Promising Newcomer award in 2004[2] and an Eisner award - Talent Deserving of Wider Recognition in 2005.[3] He is currently producing The Infidel, featuring Pigman. In 2015, he won a controversial contest advertised as the “First Annual Muhammad Art Exhibit and Contest.”[4]

Also:

Jesus and Mo is a British webcomic created by an artist using the pseudonym Mohammed Jones. Launched in November 2005, the comic is published on its eponymous website once a week.

Jesus and Mo share a flat[2] (and a bed), and occasionally venture outside, principally to a public house, The Cock and Bull, where they drink Guinness and engage in conversation and debate with an atheist female bartender known simply as Barmaid, who is never drawn but is characterised only as an out-of-frame speech bubble. The barmaid functions as the voice of reason when criticising the Abrahamic religions or religion in general. Other times, Jesus or Mo may act as the voice of reason depending on which religion a particular comic aims to criticise. Jesus will act as the author's mouthpiece if the comic aims to criticise Islam while the character Mo will be used to criticise Christianity.

Jesus & Mo (the characters) are absurd, blinkered, and oddly very sweet. J&M (the cartoon) is brilliant: sharp, delicious, irresistible.

Salman Rushdie

Jesus and Mo cartoons are wonderfully funny and true.
Richard Dawkins

http://www.jesusandmo.net/

172 “Censorship & Persecution”. Arab Comix Project; Humboldt State University (2012):
In 2011, Ali Farzat’s hands were broken by masked thugs on account of his critical caricatures of Syrian dictator Bashar Al-Assad. In Algeria, cartoonist Abdelhamid Amine, known by the penname “Nime”, was arrested on November 26, 2019, and sentenced to one year in prison for “insulting” figures of the state, though he was released on January 2nd, 2020.

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In 2014, Majda Shaheen was awarded Cartoonist Rights Network International Courage Award for her cartoons depicting her critical perception of the realities in Gaza and the region, specifically for a cartoon she drew illustrating the relationship between the Head of the Ruling Authority in Gaza, Ismail Haniyeh of Hamas, and the Al-Quds brigades (depicted as a dog).\footnote{\textit{Backlash against a Cartoon for Palestinian Female Cartoonist}. \textit{Arab Cartoon House} (2014). \url{http://arabcartoon.net/en/news/backlash-against-cartoon-palestinian-female-cartoonist}}
Unable to travel to the United States to accept the award, Shaheen wrote: “Despite all the obstacles and challenges put in my way, I still believe in the influence of art on society and culture, even when that influence might be undetected. It is essential for me to express myself as a woman and as a Palestinian living in Gaza, a place where opinions like mine are rarely heard and are not given the opportunity to be broadly communicated. Our political leaders willingly choose to ignore or silence voices that do not match their agenda. Revolutions begin from the simple people, who raise their voices to speak for themselves and represent the silent majority.” She disappeared in 2018, a funeral was held in her honor.

In discussing censorship and persecution of Middle Eastern artists, it is important to address the unique problems faced by female artists regardless of if they are fighting gendered oppression or simply creating aesthetic art. In traditional patriarchal countries, women often

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face a lack of opportunities, meaning that their careers are limited and censored before they can even begin.\(^{174}\)

The list goes on.

And on.

And then unfortunately keeps going.\(^{178}\)

In 2012, Belgian Israeli Cartoonist Michel Kichka attributed a decline in the production of political cartoons to rise in political correctness leading to more self-censorship among western publishers, transition to freelance and agencies rather than hiring staff cartoonists, and shift in consumer desire for moving images in an increasingly flooded, fast-paced age of information.\(^{179}\)

Since then, “Internet memes” have emerged as the next evolution of the political cartoon. Not everyone can draw a cartoon, but almost anyone can make a meme.\(^{180}\) Despite the virality of internet memes and decline of the editorial cartoons in the West, Arab cartoons have maintained significance.

![Figure 39. Collage of viral memes](image)

178 “Censorship & Persecution”, Arab Comix Project; Humboldt State University (2012).


180 Martin La Monica. “Political cartoonists are out of touch – it’s time to make way for memes”. *The Conversation* (2019).
Comics were used to facilitate reconciliation in the aftermath of the Rwandan Genocide.\textsuperscript{181} *Smile through the Tears*, created by Tutsi survivor Rupert Bazambanza, depicts the story of the Rwanga family.\textsuperscript{182} *Smile through the Tears* helped develop understanding of core issues of genocide and the legal framework of reconciliation.\textsuperscript{183}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{Smile_Through_the_Tears.jpg}
\caption{Smile Through the Tears. © Rupert Bazambanza (2005)}
\end{figure}

NGOs “Search for Common Ground” (SFCG), “World Comics”, and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) have used comics to promote conflict mediation and social progress in dozens of countries including South Sudan, Lebanon, and Pakistan.\textsuperscript{184, 185, 186}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{sfcg2011} https://www.sfcg.org/tag/comic-books/
\end{thebibliography}

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JustVision is a nonprofit organization led by Suhad Babaa and Julia Bacha and founded by Ronit Avni, that uses storytelling to highlight Palestinian and Israeli grassroots leaders working to help “end the occupation”. JustVision produced “Budrus”, a documentary that tells the story of a nonviolent campaign that was able to save the village of Budrus, through the eyes of 15-year-old Iltezam Morrar. Budrus was adapted into a graphic novel by Irene Nasser to highlight issues shown in the movie and make it more accessible to children.\textsuperscript{187}

\textbf{Figure 41. “Budrus” Graphic Novel © JustVision.}

Between 1998 and 2000 a combined Hebrew-Arabic version of Sesame Street broadcast on local Israeli and Palestinian stations in order to generate a message of coexistence.\textsuperscript{188} A study of 275 Israeli-Jewish, Palestinian-Israeli, and Palestinian preschoolers on the effects of viewing “Rechov Sumsum/Shara’a Sisim”, showed that although some of the children had negative conceptions about adult Arabs and Jews, children, on the whole, did not invoke these


\textsuperscript{188} Daoud Kuttab. “Sesame Street, Palestine”. BearManor Media (2018).

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stereotypes when evaluating peer conflict situations between Israeli and Palestinian children. Exposure to the program was linked to an increase in children’s use of both prosocial justifications to resolve conflicts and positive attributes to describe members of the other group. Palestinian children’s abilities to identify symbols of their own culture increased over time. The results indicate the effectiveness of media-based interventions such as Rechov Sumsum/Shara’a Simsim on countering negative stereotypes by building a peer-oriented context that introduces children to the everyday lives of people from different cultures.\textsuperscript{189}  

\textbf{Figure 42. Rechov Sumsum/Shara’a Simsim, © Sesame Workshop (1998-2000)}

The first animation to originate from the middle east was “The Adventures of Gadi Ben Sussi” in 1931 by Ariel Navon. A story about a young Yemenite-Jewish boy wanders the streets of Tel Aviv. He tries his hand at a string of jobs but doesn’t last long at any of them. He looks for love and finds it, but only after many trials and tribulations, including floating above 1930s Tel Aviv while clutching hold of a cluster of balloons.\(^{190}\)

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The first publicly screened animation to originate from the Middle East was “Mish Mish Effendi” in 1940. It was created by the Jewish Frenkel brothers in Egypt, originally from Russia, who settled in Jaffa, Palestine, and were deported to Alexandria by the Ottoman Empire out of false suspicion. Their cartoons, inspired largely by Waltz Disney, the Fleischer Brothers, and al-


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\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{clip-compilation.png}
\caption{The Frenkel Brothers' \textit{Mish Mish Effendi} Clip Compilation (1940).}
\end{figure}

Mish-Mish Effendi is described as the Egyptian Mickey Mouse, but their cartoons are much more reminiscent of their Jewish-American counterparts.\footnote{Copyright Disclaimer: I do not own the rights to the media in this essay which are used under Section 107 of the Copyright Act 1976 “fair use” policy for purposes such as news reporting, teaching, scholarship, and research. Copyright © 2021 Andrew Hirsh} The Fleischer brothers, Walt
Disney’s top competitors, pioneered “Koko the Clown”, “Popeye”, “Betty Boop”, and the first animated Superman series.

The Fleischer Brothers and their creations

Jews have been accused of controlling the media dating back to an anti-Jewish campaign waged in the 1920s by the Dearborn Independent, a publication backed by industrialist Henry Ford Sr, based on the notorious and fraudulent book, The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion. "If Jews control the media, why don't we give ourselves better press?" — Jon Stewart.

This perception stems in part from Jewish dominance in Hollywood which is largely attributed to the confluence of the inception of the motion picture industry during the third and largest wave of Jewish immigrants to the United States between 1880 and 1924, the prohibition of Jews from professional guilds and universities by the elite, and the general trend of lower classes and new

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Commented [67]: Maybe discuss how Jews were excluded from many professions and guild, Jewish entertainers, who'd they steal it from created Hollywood… Milt gross
- Kubert, Joe. The Adventures of Yaacov & Isaac. Mahrwood Press (distributed in the U.S. by Feldheim Publishers), 2004. Kubert’s stories about two young brothers impart Torah values and Jewish history lessons in an exciting action-adventure comic book style that is likely to appeal to elementary school boys ages 10 and up.
- Kubert, Joe. Yossel, April 19, 1943: A Story of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. ibooks, 2003. Kubert imagines what his life would have been like had his parents not left Europe before the Holocaust. His namesake, Yossel, chronicles his time in the Warsaw Ghetto by illustrating the life and death around him.
- Kubert, Joe. Jew Gangster. ibooks, 2005. These two graphic novels shed light on a relatively unknown period of time in Jewish history, when Jewish gangsters violently ruled the streets.

Margarette Winkel Herblock
- Al Hirschfeld
- David Levine
- Mad Magazine
- Hanoch Piven
- Joseph Bau
- Rube Goldberg
- Maurice Sendak
- Shel Silverstein
- Saul Steinberg
- Margret and H. A. Rey- Curious George
- Eric Goldberg – Disney Animator

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immigrants to pursue success in entertainment because of the lack of barriers to entry.\textsuperscript{196, 197} “One of the main reasons Jews have done so well in the entertainment field is due to their relationship with storytelling. It includes a feeling for emotional storytelling, what we would say has schmaltz, it makes you cry, it makes you laugh. That kind of storytelling is part of Jewish tradition.”\textsuperscript{198} Jews are responsible for the best-selling, most widely distributed story on earth, the bible.

Starting from the late 1930s, Egyptian artists produced short, culturally relevant animations. Egypt was the first Arab country to introduce higher education in art. The School of Fine Arts (Madrasa al-Funun al-Jamilah), established in 1908, was later reorganized and followed by other state-sponsored institutions. An animation unit was founded at Egyptian Television in 1961. Due to the high costs of technical equipment for celluloid production, the vast majority of practicing Egyptian animators, such as Antoine Selim (b. 1910), Samee’ Rafe’, Zakariyya Ajlan, Mohamed Haseeb, Mustafa Hussein (b. 1935), Muhammad Hakem (b. 1929), Ali Moheb (b. 1935) and Noshi Iskander (b. 1938), could only work if they were well integrated into local academic and/or media hierarchies - a situation that persisted until the late 1990s. Although most animation were commercials, commissioned by cinema or television, some animators also

\textsuperscript{197} Joellyn Zollman. “Jewish Immigration to America: Three Waves: Sephardic, German, and Eastern European immigrants each contributed to the formation of American Jewry.” My Jewish Learning: https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/jewish-immigration-to-america-three-waves/
managed to produce their own short stories. After the presidency of Gamal Abdel-Nasser ended in 1970, animation production declined.199

From the 1960s, several Algerian (Mohamed Aram, Mohamed Mazari, Menouar Merabtene, et al) and Tunisian (Amor Ben Mahmoud, Mongi Sancho, Zouhair Mahjoub, et al) animators working in national television industries produced short animations. But the number remained low because institutional support was lacking, and circulation was limited to local screens and film festivals. From the introduction of terrestrial television broadcasting in Arab countries in the mid-1950s,3 to the arrival of satellite television in the 1990s, Arab television was almost exclusively run by government institutions and penetration of television content was largely confined within national borders, meaning that Arab Animation between Business and Politics local media authorities and censors could act as gatekeepers. As the local animation was extremely rare, television slots dedicated to children were dominated by cheap, locally produced live content, and dubbed foreign animations. Choosing the sources of imports during the Cold War era was often a political decision. Socialist Arab countries such as Syria, Libya and Iraq preferred products from France and the Eastern bloc, while Gulf countries tended to import from the US. However, certain animations, such as Tom and Jerry, circulated regardless of political orientation, and there was also admiration for Japanese anime across the entire Arab world. While a number of Arab state-run channels established their own dubbing departments, traditional and new regional centers of cultural production such as Egypt and Syria began to distribute foreign animated content dubbed into literary Arabic to other markets, and hence

became gatekeepers not only on the national, but, to a certain extent, also on the regional level. Under the presidency of Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1956, Television became a fundamental part for the production of national culture in Egypt. This resulted, an entire generation of Egyptian Animators, who dedicated their talents to making educational pieces and commercials of goods produced by President Nasser’s socialist-type industries, targeting the animation to everyone. Nasser’s death in 1970 resulted in the decline of Egyptian animation.

Although computer-generated imagery (CGI) was introduced in the US and Europe in the 1960s, it did not reach the Arab world until the late 1980s. CGI productions use computers to draw and color the frames instead of the human hand, but overall, the technology remained expensive and labor-intensive. Wells notes that dominant visual styles of animated cartoons generally recall figurative illustration traditions of the country of origin. That Arab artists showed limited interest in producing animated cartoons can likely be attributed to the fact that the decorative and illustrative arts in the Arab world were largely dominated by non-figurative decoration (mosaic, calligraphy), avoiding figurative illustration. No CGI studios were established in the Arab world until the late 1980s. In the case of early CGI technology, it was difficult to separate the creative tasks from the technical and mechanical ones. Because communication was slow and production costly, constant personal Supervision was needed


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from authors to make the animation process efficient. In response, some Arab animation producers moved the entire production process to technically more advanced countries, and often also travelled there themselves to keep control over the texts. This was the case with Al-Amirah wal-Nahr ('The Princess and the River'), a propagandistic Iraqi feature-length production produced in 1982 by Babylon, a production company established in 1980, under director Faissal al-Yasseri. While scriptwriting and dubbing was performed in Iraq, the entire production process was moved to East Germany and the scenario was written by an Australian expert.203

Another example is represented by the pioneer works of the so-called "Islamic Animation (Cartoun Islamiyy), a special genre produced mainly by religious foundations from

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Saudi Arabia and the Gulf. The pioneer producer of the genre, a Saudi company called Ella, moved the production of its early feature-length films to Turkey, where Muassasat Alla lil-Intag al Fanniyy wal-Tawzi’ (The Alla Institution for Art Production and Distribution), now known as “OKToons”, had been established in 1992 by Saudi businessman Osama Khalifa. The company made several feature-length animation productions on historical and Islamic topics, amongst them Muhammad al-Fatih (1995), Rihlat al-Khuloud (1996), Asad Ayn Jalout (1998) and Tareq ibn-Ziyad (1999).

**Etana** Production produced multiple impressive 2D animated adult comedy series. One of their most famous production is the Al-Attag for Al-Sharqiya TV, Iraq’s first animation series. Directed by Muhaned Abu Humra, with executive producer by Ali Abu Khumra, Al-Attag follows the adventure of Attag, a poor man from Baghdad who sells used items, and his odd group of friends including a talking Donkey distinguished for his wisdom, as he struggles to convince his lover’s wealthy father to give them the permission to get married. In the end, Jumaa can marry his beloved Hanadi when it happens, and Hanadi’s father loses his business and falls to the level of poverty as Attag’s family. Atak frequently sings in music video style:

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Commented [69]: Muhanad Abu Khumrah is an Iraqi director, producer, and writer. He is best known for Hawa Baghdad (2019), Al Fashafeesh (2018), Al Attag (2011). He is best known for his comedy, animation, romantic drama and commercial advertising. He holds numerous awards. Muhanad Abu Khumrah was born in the city of Babylon in Iraq on April 5, 1983.

The Babylonian Muhanad Abu Khumrah was raised up with his 2 older brothers in the heart of Baghdad. An early interest in art led him to explore his talent to draw and create characters, his work amazed all and sundry even the gray-haired artists, and thus he won enormous prizes as a child.

As he grew up he started to watch more movies and developed his love for visual effects and animations. At the age of 17, Muhaned purchased his first computer and began exploring new programs such as 3D MAX, After Effect and Maya to improve his ability to transfer the inspiring creative world in his mind into real-looking animations. He started his career in 2D & 3D animations and then he moved into directing commercials, visual effect and designing intros and titles.

Over the years Muhaned gained well-respected reputation in the field as he worked with several TV Channels, Companies and other high profile studios in Dubai.

Currently, Muhaned is running his own Post-Production Company Etana in Dubai Media City employing his remarkable talent and imagination to create a range of TV commercials, Series in the highest Quality as well as Special Visual Effects, Motion Graphics.

https://www.muhaned.tv/about
**Shalash** is an Iraqi animated series that revolves around Shalash an educated young man living in a poor neighborhood in Iraq and the daily events and stories that happen in it. Shalash owns a taxi that his loyal friend, Daaboul works on. In this poor neighborhood there is a big love story between Shalash and Suzana who works as a teacher in one of the schools in the Tanak neighborhood, but unfortunately, the two cannot marry because of the tribal and clan ideas that this poor region lives through that her cousin forbade. Various events take place in each episode about the events and problems that happen in the Tanak neighborhood between the work figures in a purposeful and critical comic form.
Al-Fasha Fish is a satirical comedy that deals with the social problems experienced by the Iraqi people in a comic style, as it addresses many issues of concern to the family and the Iraqi youth and finds solutions by providing advice in a comic way that affects the Iraqi youth in an indirect way, combining some of the most famous cartoon comic characters in Iraq, Jumaa Al-Atak and Shalash from Al-Tanak neighborhood with their most prominent friends, Alouli, Al-Salit, Daaboul, Dahesh, Umm Shalash (Tashara) and Abu Juma'a (Maziel), and Umm Juma'a (Khajia).
The revival of animation in Egypt began in the 1988 when Dr. Mona Abu El-Nasr established Cairo Cartoon. Bakkar was broadcast on Egyptian Television Channel One for the first time in 1998. The success of Bakkar’s first season within the Arab World allowed Cairo Cartoon became an incubator for many Egyptian animators.

Dr. Mona Abu El-Nasr was an Egyptian animation director from Alexandria (1952-2003). She received a bachelor’s degree in fine arts from Helwan University in 1975, and a Ph.D. in animation from the University of California in 1988. She is best known for directing the 1998 animated series “Bakkar”, which follows the adventure of the young Nubian, Bakkar, his pet goat Rashida, and Bakkar’s friends. Her other notable work includes “The Sindbad’s Journey” and “Super Heneidy”.206

The success of Bakkar allowed young animators later would establish their own CGI and 3D studios and signed for their own production studios. Before this, foreign series would have been dubbed in Arabic to fit the viewers. Years later television workers with experience in dubbing foreign animation began to create Arab made animation.

Bakkar was an innovative Egyptian cartoon character originating from the Egyptian heritage mixed with flair and beauty in southern Egypt. The beloved series follows the adventure of the ten-year-old young Nubian-Egyptian, Bakkar, his pet goat Rashida, and Bakkar’s friends. The show would broadcast each year during the primetime of the holy month of Ramadan, directly after the breaking of the daily fast. The episodes of Bakkar dedicatedly

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focused on raising children’s awareness of their responsibilities towards others. One episode for example would demonstrates the sympathy for the disabled; another episode would be about the importance of school and education.

The early episodes were very short, first broadcasting in 1998 they lasted over a five-minute duration, as the popularity increased, the episodes then extended to 20 minutes for each episode. After a nine-year run, the series totaled 252 episodes.

El-Nassr claimed that the figure of Bakkar was inspired by the Egyptian authorities labelling of the year 1997 as ‘The year of Nubain Child’. The intention was to showcase the people of Nubia. The idea also focused on showing Egypt’s heritage, which included Pharaonic temples and museums, with a young Nubian child living a new adventure in every episode, interacting with his friends, and meeting new people.
The show depicted the everyday life of a young child, from going to school, causing trouble to playing football with his friends. Bakkar was never presented as a superhero who saves the day, but as a sensible and honest boy who learns from his mistake, listens to grown-ups, and loves people, animals, and his country. He is presented as an ‘authentic’ Egyptian, characterized by being clean, loving, smart and brave. To teach children right from wrong, some episode Bakkar’s friend Hassouna, who is known for being a showoff would occasionally get into trouble. This allowed Bakkar to become the voice of good, being the one to teach us that his friend was wrong to do so, resulting in the audience to fall further in love with Bakkar as a character.

What made Bakkar successful was although he’s Egyptian he’s from a minority group within Egypt itself. Bakkar’s Nubian from his appearance, language, and settings; his skin is dark, and his clothes have the characteristics of traditional Nubian clothing. At the time people from Nubia had minimal roles in movies and were occasionally cast as farmers or simple tour guides. The show brought a positive stereotype presents to a minority group and allowed views to learn more about the Nubian culture and by showing those who still care for their families and each other, still live by traditional values and still believe in the good of other people. Through nine seasons, Bakkar grew into a national icon and a symbol of Egyptian unity.

Bakkar arrived on the scene just in time to support President Hosni Mubarak’s (1981–2011) nationalist agenda at a time of domestic tensions and struggles with an armed Islamist
opposition. Through nine seasons, Bakkar grew into a national icon and a symbol of Egyptian unity. 207

Mona’s contributions to Egyptian animation and Egyptian TV lies precisely in her interest in local stories, characters, and language, allowing the children of Egypt to be represented within their own country’s television.

According to Mona: “It’s easier to import foreign series and have them dubbed, but this would be a very negative effect on our children. Neither the content nor the characters reflect our culture reality.”

After being suspended due to production issues in 2007, Bakkar was revived as a 3D-animated series on Ramadan 2015 only to be suspended again and then revived again in Ramadan 2021, each time adapting to new technological environments both on and off screen while avoiding explicitly politics endeavoring instead to express object morality and education. 209


209 https://www.egyptindependent.com/bakkar-animated-series-returns-this-ramadan-in-3d/
The first female animation producer and distributor was Jewish, Hungarian-born, Margaret J. Winkler, who began her career as personal secretary of Harry Warner, one of the founders of Warner Brothers. In 1917, Warner Brothers began distributing cartoons of “Mutt and Jeff”. Warner was impressed with Winkler’s talents, and when Max and Dave Fleischer came to him with their series “Out of the Inkwell”, he gave it to Winkler and encouraged her to form her own distribution company. In 1922, she signed a contract with Pat Sullivan Productions to produce Felix the Cat cartoons. This established her reputation as the top distributor in the cartoon world. It was a good thing, because at the end of the same year the Fleischer brothers, flush with success because of Winkler’s work, left her to form their own distribution company, Red Seal Pictures. However, much Sullivan helped Winkler’s business, he

and Winkler were constantly fighting. In September 1923, the renewal of his contract came up, and his unrealistic demands meant Winkler Pictures might have to survive for a while without its biggest star. Winkler viewed a pilot reel, called “Alice's Wonderland”, submitted by then neophyte animator Walt Disney, the first entry in the “Alice Comedies” series.\textsuperscript{211} Winkler was intrigued with the idea of a live-action girl in a cartoon world, and signed Disney to a year-long contract despite the fact that the studio that made the cartoon was now bankrupt.\textsuperscript{212} Disney subsequently formed a new studio, Disney Brothers, which was the first cartoon studio in Hollywood and eventually changed its name to Walt Disney Productions. Disney was helped by the tutelage of Winkler, who insisted on editing all of the “Alice Comedies” episodes herself. Winkler was the first female member of the Motion Picture Producer's Guild. To disguise her gender, she would sign letters "M.J. Winkler."\textsuperscript{213}

Another influential Jewish-American Cartoonist was Milt Gross (1895-1953). Born in the Bronx, Gross began an early career at the age of 20 working for New York Journal on a comic strip titled Phool Phan Phables. He is most famous for his 1926 publications “Hiawatta witt no odder” – a funny Yinglish (Yiddish-English) retelling of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s famous poem “The Song of Hiawatha” and “Nize Baby” – adapted into a Sunday newspaper comics strip – as well as “He Done Her Wrong”, a parodic collection of woodcut panels which tells a love story.


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story of about a hunter and a singer in Alaska and a scheming villain who tries to come between them, without a word of dialogue. Many of his comic strip characters such as “Count Screwloose” were featured in animated films which he wrote, animated, and/or directed including “Jitterbug Follies” (1939) and “Wanted: No Master” (1939).

Historian Raz Greenberg suggests that both Gross and the Fleischer brothers had a profound influence on Japan’s “God of Comics” Osamu Tezuka (1928-1989), both aesthetically, technically, and culturally through their own graphically expressed Jewish, immigrant experience.  

Yaakov Kirschen was born in Brooklyn NY in 1938. He studied art at Queens College and became a cartoonist after he graduated in 1961. In 1971 he moved to Israel, changed his first name from Jerry to Yaakov, and in 1973 began drawing a daily editorial strip called Dry Bones, a satirical comic series whose mission is “through research and analysis, to create an educational outreach to advance popular understanding and to correct this willful rewriting of history. The project intends to do so by means of cartoons, cartoon history books, and other works and through educational lectures.” Dry Bones has become internationally syndicated and is known as “Israel’s Political Comic Strip”, published in The Jerusalem Post. Kirschen is a member of both America’s National Cartoonists Society and the Israeli Cartoonists Society. He has also been an innovative computer game designer and inventor. His company LKP ltd. has

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done work for major computer and game companies both in Israel and in the U.S. In 2009, Kirschen was made a visiting fellow and artist in residence of Yale University’s Initiative for the Interdisciplinary Study of Antisemitism and Racism. In 2010, Yale published Kirschen’s ground-breaking working paper entitled “Memetics and the Viral Spread of Antisemitism through “Coded Images in Political Cartoons”. The paper identifies antisemitism as a behavioral virus, reveals its use by totalitarian movements in their attempts to conquer the West, and isolates its three viral strains: “The Dehumanization Codes”, which portray Jews as undeserving of the empathy that humans naturally feel for one another, spreading the belief that Jews are vermin, blood drinkers, or demons in league with evil forces. The Stereotyping Codes, which describe Jews as rich, ugly, money-grubbing, powerful, and secretly controlling the banks, the media, and the world. And “The Moral Inversion Codes”, which negates the history of oppression of the Jews, portraying them as oppressors equivalent to Nazis. 216

Figure 58. “Dry Bones” comic strip sample © Yaakov Kirschen

The 1960s saw the rise of satirical cartoonist Mahmoud Kahil. Kahil was born in Lebanon in 1936 and moved to London in 1978 to escape the violence of the Lebanese civil war. He became known for his commentary on the politics, Arab world, Lebanon, and the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict. Kahil was able to practice self-censorship, finding creative ways to get his messages across, not only to reach people across the ideological spectrum and appease his editors, operating under authoritarian scrutiny, but also to keep him and his family safe. After being told by his employers to draw whatever he liked as long as it was not too offensive, Kahil created the character the “Arab World”, which enabled him to express himself without fear of insulting anyone in particular.\textsuperscript{217}

Kahil's “Arab World” character has been emulated by other Arab cartoonists.

Around the same time emerged Palestinian Artist Naji Al-Ali. Al-Ali’s cartoons were drawn from his experience as a Palestinian refugee since childhood and clearly reflected his political stance, which was often critical of the Arab regimes. As Al-Ali states, “I am accused of being biased and I don’t deny it, I am not neutral, I am on the side of the poor.”

His famous character “Handala”, appeared in Al-Siyasa in Kuwait in 1969. The ten-year-old boy represented the age when Al-Ali was forced to leave Palestine and would not grow up until he could return to his homeland; his back turned and clasped hands symbolized the character’s rejection of “outside solutions”. The name “Handala” is derived from the bitter tasting plant “handhal”, symbolizing the bitter plight of the refugee.

This phenomenon draws parallels to the Jewish tradition of eating bitter herbs, “maror”, on Passover to remember the bitterness of slavery in Egypt. Al-Ali was murdered for his activism in 1987 by anonymous gunmen in London.

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Ali’s Handala is recognized all over the world. Ali had a tremendous cultural influence on Palestinian symbolism and future generations of Palestinian artists.

Mohammad Saba’aneh is a Palestinian graphic artist living in Ramallah in the West Bank. He is the principal political cartoonist for Al-Hayat al-Jadida, the Palestinian Authority’s daily newspaper, and has published his work in many other newspapers around the Arab World such as, Al-Etehad, Al-Quds Al-Arabi, Al-Ghad Al-Ordoni and Al-Akhbar Al-Lubnanieh. In 2013, Saba’aneh spent five months in Israeli prison, charged with collaborating with Hamas, after his brother, a member of Hamas, wrote and published a book on Palestinian political prisoners that included Saba’aneh’s art. Saba’aneh stressed that the charges against him were baseless because he frequently publishes cartoons critical of all Palestinian political parties. Though

Commented [73]: Maybe add Baha Boukhari Boukhari, a Palestinian cartoonist, knows firsthand the dangers of his craft. In 2008, authorities in Gaza suspended publication of the popular newspaper Al Ayaam, where he was an employee, claiming that a comic he drew insulted Hamas. Boukhari and two senior employees faced a prison sentence until a series of demonstrations in Ramallah led to the dissolution of the charges.

221 Patrick O. Strickland. “Jailed by Israel for his cartoons, Mohammad Saba’aneh speaks out”. Electronic Intifada (2013).
Saba’aneh was accused of “inciting violence”, he insists that his mordant cartoons celebrate what Palestinians call “popular resistance” such as rock-throwing against Israeli forces, but do not glorify knife attacks against civilians. “Look, we’ve tried all the alternatives. Nothing is working,” he said. “So what you call violence, we call resistance.” Saba’aneh’s books of illustrations, “*White and Black: Political Cartoons from Palestine*” (*Just World Books*, 2017) and “*Palestine in Black and White*” (*Saqi Books*, 2018) metaphorically capture the Palestinian struggle. Palestinian iconography is repeated throughout Saba’aneh’s work such as Israel’s concrete walls, caged birds, olive trees, cacti, kites, keys... to construct, reconstruct, and reinforce the meaning of Palestinian identity and struggle. Drawing upon his experience in the Israeli prison system, Saba’aneh illuminates the psychological dependence of Palestinian prisoners on heroism and martyrdom “as a survival tactic to protect our souls from the dehumanizing conditions in which we found ourselves and to safeguard our ability to resist”, and depicts all of Palestine as an open-air prison.

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Omayya Joha, the first female artist to work for a daily Arabic newspaper, called the “successor of Naji Al-Ali”, her role model. She established the cartoon production company “Johatoon”, with the financial contributions of working women and created the first animated movie dealing with the Palestinian “Nakba” called “Hikayat Miftah” (“Story of a Key”).

Drawings from Mohammad Sabaaneh’s “White and Black: Political Cartoons from Palestine” (Just World Books, 2017) and “Palestine in Black and White” (Saqi Books, 2018)

“Hikayat Miftah” © Johatoon (2007)

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While representing the unbridled perspective of herself, Gazans, and the Palestinian people, Joha demonstrate how cartoons can cross the line from legitimate criticism of Israel to anti-Semitism.\(^{227, 228, 229}\)

Leila Abdelrazaq drew influence from Al-Ali’s work in her graphic novel \textit{Badawi}, which tells the story of her Palestinian family. Al-Ali’s “Handala” has been compared to Srulik as symbols of a generation of Israeli and Palestinian children.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{cartoons.png}
\caption{Cartoons by Omayya Joha}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{badawi.png}
\caption{\textit{Badawi}, Just World Books (2015) © Leila Abdelrazaq.}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{peacekids.png}
\caption{Jonathan Kislev & Moodi Abdullah, “The Peace Kids”, Tel Aviv, Bethlehem (2013).}
\end{figure}

\footnotesize
\(^{228}\) “Cartoonist Joha vows to continue drawing despite deleting her Facebook page”. The Palestinian Information Center (2016).
\(^{229}\) \url{https://www.csmonitor.com/2001/1128/p1s4-wome.html}

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Religious themes continue to play a prominent role in Middle Eastern comics and animation production. Since at least 2018, the majority of comic books published in Israel are aimed at Haredi children and often require a stamp of approval of religious councils such as the Board of Supervision for Jewish Literature, an organization that reviews books aimed at the young Haredi audience and endorses them, determining the books to be educational and appropriate for the tender minds of Haredi readers, giving parents the peace of mind that the materials their children are reading have rabbinic approval. "Due to advanced technology, there is an abundance of reading materials available to our children, often coming from unknown sources. It has become imperative for parents to monitor what their children are reading, creating a need for a review board such as this one."²³⁰

Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler (1892-1953) speaks to the influence of imagery and thus importance of protecting young minds from harmful images and promoting morally positive content. “Thoughts and logical argument may have difficulty penetrating the subconscious, but images can reach down and after the subconscious springs of action.”²³¹ Additionally, comics are particularly popular among religious children because their parents forbid them from accessing the internet or television to protect them from content that goes against their

Commented [AH74]: Add how popular religious comics are for religious children.

strongly held values and during their Sabbath, they can’t use electronics which makes a good book particularly appealing.

Data on the state of Children Books according to the annual National Library of Israel book report.


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In 1995, director and university lecturer Zeina Zamzam released the first clay animation series of Egypt, which revolved around the lives of the Prophets of Islam. With scripts approved by al-Azhar, Egypt's most prestigious religious institution, Zamzam's productions became part of the period's religious discourse. The characteristics and narratives of the productions also paved the way, and served as an example, for later Egyptian Islamic animated productions, including Qisas al-Qur'an (Stories of the Qur'an), released in 2011, among the most significant Islamic animated series to date, which signaled the rise of cartoons as cultural agents, with a distribution transcending not only national, but also geo-linguistic borders, reaching even non-Arab Muslim countries such as Turkey, Indonesia, and Malaysia.\textsuperscript{232}

“Muhammad: The Last Prophet”, produced in 2002, was the first animated feature film to depict the story of Mohammad. It was produced by Badr International and directed by Richard Rich.\textsuperscript{233} Muhammad: The Last Prophet got approval from The Council of Al-Azhar Al-Sharief after two years of reviewing it from script to film.\textsuperscript{234} It refrained from portraying and voicing the prophet and his revered companions, instead using POV, text, pillars of light, objects, and other creative means of representing these important figures to stay within official Islamic guidelines.


\textsuperscript{234} Pinsky (2004).
These omissions and replacements, however, sometimes disrupt the communication of the story. It is not necessary that the artist who produces Islamic art or films should be Muslim; but it should be produced to serve Islam, be influenced by Islam and follow Islamic law. 235

Such an example comes from ATA Studio with a depiction of the ‘Akeida” the bondage of Abraham’s son, the first division between the Jewish tradition in which it was Isaac who was almost sacrificed and the Islamic tradition in which it was Ishmael.

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The FineMedia Group produced several other Islamic-Middle Eastern animated films including *Great Women of Islam* (2002), *Salman the Persian* (2002), and *Before the Light* (2002), which were purchased and distributed by the Al-Jazeera Children’s channel, except for *Before the Light* to its depiction of “Hagar”, a woman married to the patriarch Abraham” as well as “Muhammad: The Last Prophet”, which was approved by The Council of Al-Azhar Al-Sharief Islamic Research Academy in which Muhammad (PBUH) is depicted as a baby, though from a far camera angle without showing his face and body details, as well as using point-of-view.236

![Mohammad: The Last Prophet © 2002 Fine Media Group](image)

In 2020, Netanel and Bat-El Epstein created the animated series “The Racheli Way” based on the beloved audio CD series “Racheli Catana” “Little Racheli” which teaches Jewish values through the adventures of a spunky, bright girl.


Commented [AH76]: Also maybe add AJC efforts to use comics to combat anti-Semitism:

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The second animated feature, “Ha’Ya’ar Ha-Kasum” (“Enchanted Amlash Forest”), was directed by Shlomo Suriano and screened at international festivals in 1974.
The establishment of Israel’s two television stations in the late 1960’s brought about the opening of animation courses, the founding of studios, overseas studies, Ministry of Industry and Trade support for animation shorts and screenings of Israeli animation at festivals around the world. Among the important developments of the 1980’s were Sesame Street productions, Roni Oren’s plasticine films, which were purchased by many television stations, and the founding of International Animated Film Society (ASIFA) Israel.

1990s Israel also saw huge changes for animation with the introduction of cable TV. Uri Shinar, who had previously produced outstanding animation and who would go on to establish the AniBoom studio, oversaw its content.


After the collapse of the Soviet Union over 800,000 people emigrated to Israel during the 1990s, among them were skilled artists and animators. Some found work in existing studios or opened their own. Around fifty were invited in 1991 to go through animation training at a

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new studio, Anima Studios, established in Beit-Shemesh by veteran producer-director David (Dudu) Shalita, with some government support. The studio created commercials, five children’s cassettes, and some work for foreign markets before it closed in 1996.

Some of the artists joined Shalita at Disk-In, Tel Aviv, for the ambitious film “Rashi: A Light after the Dark Ages”, produced by Rabbi Berel Wein’s “The Destiny Foundation”, directed by Ashley Lazarus, and voiced by Leonard Nimoy (Star Trek’s Spock). It told the story of the wise eleventh-century Torah commentator, Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhak.


In the twenty-first century, Israeli animation is bursting with renewed vigor with many cartoons and a sea of awards. Israel is turning from a consumer of animation to a producer of animation!

Commented [84]: In the twenty-first century, Israeli animation is bursting with renewed vigor with many cartoons and a sea of awards. Israel is turning from a consumer of animation to a producer of animation!

The waitress

year 2000
Country - Israel
Director - Talya Lavie

Curtain No. 2
Country-Israel
Year 2000
Director-Oran Adler

Gershon

year 2001
country israel
directed by Shunit Aharoni, Oren Yaniv
Producer Shunit Aharoni, Oren Yaniv
Cinematographer Shunit Aharoni, Oren Yaniv
composer Saar Bar Shalev
artist Shunit Aharoni, Oren Yaniv
Editing: Shunit Aharoni, Oren Yaniv
genre cartoon, short film
time11 min.
awards
Film Schools Festival, Mexico
Students Film Festival, Moscow
Fidec - International Festival for Cinema Schools, Huy, Belgium
Festival of Short Films and New Images, Rome
Haifa International Film Festival - First Prize (short film)
Hannover Film Festival Germany
Menaseh and Nechama
Country-Israel
Year-2001
Director-Micha Amitai
awards
Melbourne Students Festival, Australia, 2002
British Animation Awards, London, 2002
Haifa Film Festival, 2001
MK 22

Country-Israel
Year-2004
genre
Animation
Sitcom
created by
Yaron Niski

Commented [85]: Add: Caspion
Country-Israel
Year-2004
Director-Noam Meshulam

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In 2012, "Pitchi Poy" set out to develop an animated feature film inspired by the paintings of pioneering Israeli artist and children’s book author-illustrator Nachum Gutman, called “The Boy who Painted a Donkey Blue” (the Hebrew name is “Bein Holot Ushvil Klipot”), a coming-of-age story about an eight-year-old boy named “Nachum”, who arrives with his family to Jaffa in Ottoman Palestine as the British are seizing control. Nachum is caught at the juncture of two cultures, yearning to be an artist, forced to become a fighter.

Pitchi Poy developed two other animated feature films in 2013 with the support of the Jerusalem Film Fund, “The Sand Castle”, which shows what happens inside a sand castle after the children who built them leave the beach and return to their homes and “Baldy Heights”, a story freely adapted from Ephraim Sidon’s children’s book “Ma’aleh Karahot,” which follows a girl from Curly Hills into the enemy city of Baldy Heights, “where every scalp is sleek and shiny, every building domed and polished and baldness is legally required and viciously enforced”.

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However, none of these films were able to collect enough funding to produce as full-length feature and instead became animated shorts.\footnote{Nirit Anderman. “Can Jerusalem Redraw the Global Animation Map?” Haaretz (2015): https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/culture/.premium-redrawing-the-global-animation-map-1.5344443}

Pitchi Poy developed iconic animated commercials for some of Israel’s biggest brands such as Osen’s “Bamba”:

\[\text{Bamba Commercial © Pitchi Poy}\]
Pitchi Poy also created several original Hebrew animated series including “Ulai Pil” (“Maybe an Elephant”), based on a play from the Orna Porat Theater in Tel Aviv, about two sisters, Gali, the older, tidier sister and Ayelet, who loves to draw. When Gali asks her what she draws, she answers, “Maybe an elephant?” Ayelet paints “Maybe Elephant” and “Unfinished”, and when no one is around they come to life, come out of the page and get into all sorts of trouble.

In 2021, Pitchi Poy developed a beautiful animated short about Donna Gracia, Doña Gracia Nasi, a Portuguese intellectual and one of the wealthiest Jewish women of Renaissance Europe, who developed an escape network that saved hundreds of Conversos from the Inquisition, as part of Tel Aviv’s Beit Hatfutsot-Museum of the Jewish People’s gallery, “Heroes – Trailblazers of the Jewish People”.

“The Legend of Dona Gracia Mendes Nasi © Pitchi Poy 2021


Commented [AHS]: Maybe add: Veteran Israel illustrator and animator Yossi Abulafia, who used to head the animation department at the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in Jerusalem, will receive a special honor at the festival. Abulafia has created animated clips for television shows in Israel and abroad, including the 1970s Israeli satirical program “Nikui Rosh,” worked as an illustrator for several newspapers and created an animated video of the Hebrew children’s book “Nehama the Louse” (Hakina Nehama). https://www.haaretz.com/1.5152339

Commented [88]: Maybe add: Geva’s series entitled Yoman Hapakid (The diary of the clerk) and the Yossef and his Brothers
In 2009, “Fatenah” became the first 3D animated film made in the Palestinian territories. Animated and directed by Ahmad Habash and produced by Saed Andoni. The screenplay was written by Saed Andoni, Ahmad Habash, and Ambrogio Manenti. This 27-minute animation was released and distributed with the support of WHO West Bank and Gaza, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and Sabreen Association for Artistic Development. Fatenah, based on a true story documented by WHO and Physicians for Human Rights (PHR)-Israel, is about a 27-year-old young woman living in Gaza, who while conducting a self-examination, discovers a lump in her breast and desperately seeks medical treatment outside Gaza. In 2003, he directed his first professional animation “Coming Back”, taking a blackly humorous view of the Palestine/Israel question.
In 2006, he directed and animated Flee, a sand animation short, part of a Palestinian filmmaker collective’s project called “Palestine, Summer”.

Amer Shomali is a Palestinian interdisciplinary visual artist who uses conceptual art, painting, digital media, films and comics to explore Palestinian sociopolitical issues and revolution iconography. In 2014, Shomali completed the animated documentary The Wanted 18, co-directed with Canadian director Paul Cowan, about the efforts of his Palestinian town of Beit Sahour to establish an independent dairy industry during the First Intifada. The idea for The Wanted 18 began in Shomali’s boyhood, spent largely at a Syrian refugee camp, where his main escape had been reading comic books, one of which dealt with the story of the Beit Sahour cows. The Wanted 18 was named Best Documentary from the Arab World at the 2014 Abu Dhabi Film Festival, and the Best Documentary at Carthage Film Festival.

241 http://www.amershomali.info/

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Shomali has used political cartoons and animation to support local and international political campaigns and open local social debates such as the comic series, “Zan Al-An” (“Zan Now”).

In 2007 Shomali also created an animated series together with Palestinian artist Basel Nassr as part of Zan Studios called "مﻮﻤﻫﺔﻛﺮﺤﺘﻣ" ("Homoom Motahrika") (Animated Troubles) which aired on national Palestinian TV in 2008 a mature, modern cartoon that spotlights, criticizes and demystifies many key social issues in Palestinian society ranging from police corruption, vices and intellectual resistance. Subhi, the protagonist, is famous for his big lips, wild hair, and the troublesome life he leads. Radwan Kasmiya directed Wall in My Heart

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Commented [AH92]: Maybe add Emile Bravo’s “The Ben Qutuz Brothers in Frustration Land”
(2008), a story about a Palestinian family from the West Bank: three days of going to school through checkpoints, visiting Palestinian prisoners, and facing Israeli military aggression.

There is also a Jewish youngster, forced to live in Palestine, who has become mentally ill.

"مومه متحركة" ("Homoom Motahrika") (Animated Troubles) © 2007 Amer Shomali, Basel Nasir, Zan Studios

In wake of the 2020 Beirut explosion, Maamoul Press, Leila’s comics-focused publishing house and literary collective based in Detroit, Michigan, responded to the 2020 Beirut Explosion by publishing a collection of illustrations created by young Lebanese artists titled Now & Then. All proceeds from sales of the book went to disaster relief in Lebanon. The American University of Beirut is home to the Mutazz and Rada Sawwaf Arab Comics Initiative, an award for emerging comics artists in the Arab World named in honor of Mahmoud Kahil, as well as one of the only graphic novel degree programs in the world.

Lebanon has developed a strong comics culture, in part due to the relatively high freedom of expression compared to the rest of the Arab world. The first small number of

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adult comics appeared in Lebanon with Carnaval (1980) and Freud (1983) by George Khoury (called JAD), and the comics collective JADWorkshop with the publication Min Bayrūt in 1989. In 2007, cartoonists Omar Khouri, Hatem Imam, Lena Merhej and Fadi Baki founded the magazine Samandal, a trilingual (Arabic, French, and English) publication out of Beirut that became one of the premier magazines for publishing both Middle Eastern and European comics. Addressing contemporary social issues, the magazine quickly became a venue that Lebanese cartoonists could use to talk about their lives. In 2015, the editors faced heavy fines after publishing a comic “belittling Christianity”.


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In response, *Muqtatafat*, an initiative of the Harvard Center for Middle Eastern Studies, became the first Middle Eastern comic anthology published in the U.S. featuring stories and illustration from many of the luminaries of Arab comics: Lena Merhej (Lebanon); Mike V. Derderian (Jordan); Omar Khouri (Lebanon); Maya Zankoul (Lebanon); Nidal El Khairy (Jordan); Mahdi Fleifel (Palestine, Holland); Basel Nasr (Palestine); Ghadi Ghosn (Lebanon); Sandra Ghosn (Lebanon, France); Wassim Maouad (Lebanon); Magdy El Shafee (Egypt); Jana Traboulsi (Lebanon); Mohamed El Shennawy (Egypt); Barrack Rima (Lebanon, Belgium); Mohamed Tawfik (Egypt), co-edited by Anna Mudd, A. David Lewis, and Paul Beran. All profits were donated to Samandal to aid them against the costs of authoritarian censorship.248

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Similarly, after the 2021 11-day Israel-Hamas war, Parents Against Child Detention, led by Nirith Ben Horin founder and chairwoman of Parents Against Child Detention with executive director Moria Shlomot.

Lena Merhej (PhD) is a Lebanese graphic artist, storyteller, professor, and editor in chief of the comics’ magazine Samandal. Her animation “Drawing the War” (2002), her comic book “Sana Kaman” (“Another year”) (2009), and her book “Mirna wa Laban” (“Yogurt and Jam”) (2011), the first full-length graphic novel to be translated from Arabic to French, received international awards.  


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Inspired largely by Samadal, comics studios began popping up across the Arab world. In Egypt there are TokTok, Garage, and El3osba; Lab619 in Tunisia; Skefkef in Morocco; Waratha in Algeria, Habka in Libya; and many more.250 Arab Comics Expert and Artist George Khoury (JAD) writes, “TokTok has gathered together young Egyptians in search of a platform for their work. In addition to responding to a crying need nationwide, TokTok is rapidly became a veritable “Arab oasis”, opening its pages artists from all over the region and...


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especially from the Maghreb, playing on the geographical proximity of the countries but also of their social, political and economic structures.”

“Maus” is a graphic novel by American cartoonist Art Spiegelman, serialized from 1980 to 1991. It depicts Spiegelman interviewing his father about his experiences as a Jewish Holocaust survivor. It was the first graphic novel to win a Pulitzer Prize. While it was not written specifically for children, the cat and mouse depictions of Nazis and Jews make it easier for a younger audience to bear the burden of learning about the Holocaust.

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Similarly, Michel Kichka, brought the story of his relationship with his holocaust surviving father to life in the animated documentary, *Kichka: Life is a Cartoon* based on his graphic novel, *Second Generation*.

*The Rabbi's Cat* (French: *Le chat du rabbin*) is a 2011 French animated film directed by Joann Sfar and Antoine Delesvaux, based on Sfar's graphic novel. It tells the story of a cat, who obtains the ability to speak after swallowing a parrot, and its owner – a rabbi in 1920s Algeria.
In the 90s in Israel, comics won a new respectability due to the efforts of Etgar Keret, who published several critically acclaimed comics stories including *Jetlag* (1998) and *Pizzeria Kamikaze* (2005). Tatia Rosenthal, born in Tel Aviv 1971, an Israeli-American artist, attended the Tisch School of the Arts at NYU where she created the short puppet animation film *Crazy Glue* (1998), based on a story by Etgar Keret, one of the most popular authors in Israel. (Many of his short stories have been adapted into films.) Keret’s work inspired another puppet animation short by Rosenthal, *A Buck’s Worth* (2005), about the suicide of a homeless man. *A Buck’s Worth* was used as proof of concept for the animated feature film *$9.99* (by Tatia Rosenthal and Etgar Keret, 2008). The feature reproduces the short film as its opening scene, using higher-budget puppets and settings. An Israeli–Australian production, *$9.99* was shot in New York. Dave Peck is unemployed and devotes himself to the meaning of life. The film is set in Sydney and focuses on the problems of Dave’s family and neighbours in order to represent the hopes and doubts of postmodern life. The silicone puppets are realistic, and their attitudes portray the characters’ multifaceted psychology. The puppets and settings are sometimes augmented by CGI. Rosenthal said:

"The biggest criticism from people who find it not to their taste is that the script is such an adult drama, it should have been done live-action. It’s a better film in puppet animation, because there are fantastic elements, and there’s a certain level of conceptualism or symbolism in the characters, in the behaviour and conflict, and putting everything in one world that is a little fantastical and has its own rules makes the piece more cohesive."


Commented [AH09]: Maybe add movie
Commented [100]: About…
Commented [101]: About…
Commented [102]: Add Tatia Rosenthal and Etgar Keret’s feature “$9.99”
Tatia Rosenthal (b. Tel Aviv, 1971), an Israeli-American artist, attended the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University. Here she created the short puppet animation film *Crazy Glue* (1998), based on a story by Etgar Keret, one of the most popular authors in Israel. (Many of his short stories have been adapted into films.) Keret’s work inspired another puppet animation short by Rosenthal, *A Buck’s Worth* (2005), about the suicide of a homeless man.

“A Buck’s Worth” (2005) which became the proof-of-concept for the Israeli-Australian feature
production “$9.99” in 2008. Dave Peck is unemployed and devotes himself to the meaning of life. The film is set in Sydney and focuses on the problems of Dave’s family and neighbors to represent the hopes and doubts of postmodern life.253

The comics collective Actus Tragicus, founded in 1995 by Rutu Modan and Yirmi Pinkus, bringing in Batia Kolton, Itzik Rennert, and Mira Friedmann, launched an era of experimentalist adult comics. Rutu Modan’s graphic novel, Exit Wounds (2007), which won the 2008 Eisner Award, tells the story of a female soldier who searches for the body of her lover, who was killed in a terror attack during the second intifada.

Modan also illustrated the children’s book, “Dad Runs Away with the Circus” (2004), written by Etgar Keret

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Rutu Modan’s ‘The Property’ tells the story of a grandmother who fled Poland during World War II and returns to Warsaw with her granddaughter to reclaim her family’s property, was chosen by Amazon as one of the best graphic novels of 2013.  


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In 2021, Modan launched her 3rd graphic novel, “Tunnels” about an amateur archeologist, Nili Broshi, who, motivated by the desire to reinstate her father’s legacy as a great archeologist, enlists a ragtag crew—a religious nationalist, her traitorous brother, and her childhood Palestinian friend, in search of the Ark of the Covenant. Backed by extensive research into this
real-world treasure hunt, Modan biblical Israel as one of the most disputed regions in the world in direct archeological competition.255

In 2013 Modan and Pinkus launched Noah Books, a project to revivify a library of classic Israeli children’s books, beginning with Modan’s “Uri Cadduri” a contemporary remake of “Uri Muri” and Pinkus’s three adventures of “Mar Gazmai Habedai”, (“Mr. Fibber”), a character created by Lea Goldberg with illustrations by Arie Navon, appearing in weekly installments in “Davar for Children”: When Mr. Fibber accidentally drops his coin in a jar of juice, he magically

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255 https://drawnandquarterly.com/books/creation/tunnels/

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shrinks so he can dive down and retrieve it. On a walk one day, he stumbles upon a giant dog with a smokestack on its back, towing a train behind it — and hitchs a ride. And just to make sure it stays sunny and warm during his vacation; he catches the sun in a net and packs it in his suitcase.256-257

In 2005, according to the BBC, the US Military Special Operations Command began soliciting creators to develop a propaganda comic book series for the Middle East. In a vain, cynical attempt to win the hearts and minds of young Arabs, the US Army stated, “in order to achieve long-term peace and stability in the Middle East, the youth need to be reached. A series


Commented [AH106]: Maybe add: Veteran Israel illustrator and animator Yossi Abulafia, who used to head the animation department at the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in Jerusalem, will receive a special honor at the festival. Abulafia has created animated clips for television shows in Israel and abroad, including the 1970s Israeli satirical program "Nikui Rosh," worked as an illustrator for several newspapers and created an animated video of the Hebrew children’s book "Nehama the Louse" (Hakina Nehama). https://www.haaretz.com/1.5152339
of comic books provides the opportunity for youth to learn lessons, develop role models, and improve their education. However, the project ultimately never got off the ground largely due to emerging competition within a similar American style superhero genre from regional comics publishers including “AK Comics”.

AK Comics formed in 2002, the first Middle Eastern superhero comics production company. Its goal was “to fill the cultural gap created over the years by providing essential Arab role models, in our case, Arab superheroes.”[^258] They created four heroes: Zein, a philosophy professor and the last of an ancient line of pharaohs. He lives in Origin City, which resembles Cairo, and uses ancient technology and superpowers to thwart evildoers. Aya, a law student driven to fighting crime when her mother is wrongly accused of murdering her father. She has no superpowers of her own but fights for justice and gender equality. Jalila, a female scientist who at the age of 16 survived an explosion at the Dimodona nuclear plant (a reference to the Dimona nuclear plant used by Israel to build its undeclared nuclear arsenal) and gained super-powers from the radiation. She protects the City of All Faiths (based on Jerusalem) from the warring Zios Army and the United Liberation Force. Rakan, a medieval warrior who survived a Mongol invasion of Mesopotamia and was raised by a saber-toothed cat. His country is constantly attacked by Mongols, Turks and Crusaders. Through the techniques of “sheba” (wisdom and peace) he is an invincible warrior. Rakan’s most known enemy to date is “Chess

Master", co-created by Rafael Albuquerque. Though the worlds they inhabit are meant to represent the Middle East and confront social issues, there is no mention of any character’s religion in the comics. The explicit absence of faith was, according to Dr. Ayman Kandeel, a way to keep one belief from looking better than another. However, problems arose with the immodest outfits of the female characters which upset conservative regional values as well as the lack of reliance of local Arab talent.

_Teshkeel Comics_ was a comics platform launched in Kuwait in 2003 by Dr. Naif Al-Mutawa, who led _The 99_ – the first superhero series inspired Islamic archetypes – to provide young Muslims with Islamic role models to dissuade them from Islamic extremism and help show the world the universal values of Islam, in part to counteract the islamophobia that spread in the aftermath of 9/11. It began as a comic book series in 2007, even partnering with comic franchise DC Comics to create a Justice League crossover mini-series, and expanded to a multi-million-dollar animated series and franchise in 2009. The animated series aired in nearly 70 countries. Though _The 99_ was initially banned in Kuwait as well as Saudi Arabia after it

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was issued a fatwa by the Grand Mufti, Dr. Naif Al-Mutawa challenged this fatwa in clerical
court, proving the virtues of The 99 and lifting the bans.\textsuperscript{262}

\begin{center}
\textit{The 99 © Dr. Naif Al-Mutawa.}
\end{center}

In 2006, social entrepreneur Suleiman Bakhit, known for his philanthropic initiatives in
the Arab world and as the son of former Jordanian Prime Minister Marouf al-Bakhit, founded
Aranim Media Factory. Bakhit’s work focused on countering/preventing violent extremism
(CVE/PVE) perpetuated by Islamic extremist groups such as ISIS and al-Qaeada, who use the
hero narrative to incite young men wage violent outer jihad, through localized comic
superheroes and social games. In 2010 Bakhit published more than 1.2M comics reaching more
than 3M youth in Jordan, which were classified as s by the Ministry of Education to complement
school curricula. After issues concerning the depiction of the Hashemite government, the
initiative was re-launched in March 2016, publishing more than 500K copies to 4th and 5th
grade children in Jordan.\textsuperscript{263} \textit{Aranim} produced comic books including \textit{Princess Heart} – “a modern

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{262} Al-Mutawa, Naif. \textit{The latest challenge of 'The 99' superheroes is tackling a fatwa}. \textit{The National}. April 26, 2014.
\textsuperscript{263} https://www.weforum.org/people/suleiman-bakhit
\end{flushright}
re-telling of *1001 Nights*”, “Section 9” – a series based on Jordan’s real-life all-female counter-terrorism team, and *Element Zero*, “a kind of Arab James Bond” which was later adapted to an animated web-series. The company also released a social game Happy Oasis described as *Farmville meets the Arab Spring*.

In 2007, in a partnership between the UAE Ministry of Education and the Watani Al Emarat Foundation created “Ajaaj” – meaning “Sandstorm” in Arabic – the first Emirati comic book superhero, in a successful effort to popularize and preserve Emirati, Arab cultural and moral heritage in the next generation. The character, a mysterious figure who flies around in a cloud of sand, performing good deeds and teaching traditional values, is not human, said to be "of the desert", which is meant to help Arabic children realize their own roots. In 2008, Watani produced Ajaaj as a theatrical performance and later scaled to animation.

The "Silver Scorpion" is a Syrian superhero created in 2010 from a collaboration between Liquid Comics, the Open Hands Initiative — a non-profit dedicated to improving people-to-people understanding and international friendship through cultural and educational exchange — and 26 American and Syrian youths with disabilities, who were asked to create a superhero who reflects what they have always wanted to see in a comic book. Silver Scorpion was cross-cultural hero promoting tolerance, inclusion, and equality in a region that


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desperately needs heroes. *The Silver Scorpion* was honored at the 2010 Clinton Global Initiative and debuted at the Dar al-Assad Opera House in Damascus in 2011. In 2012, the comic was transformed into an animated version, broadcast in partnership with MTV Voices.\(^{268}\)

![Artwork by Mukesh Singh & Liquid Comics © 2011 Open Hands Initiative.](image)

In 2008, Magdy El Shafee published *Metro*, Egypt's first adult graphic novel. *Metro* tells the story of a young software designer, who robs a bank after running afoul of a loan shark in a corrupt and dangerous Cairo. Shortly after publication, El Shafee's publisher, *Malameh*, was raided by the police and copies of *Metro* were confiscated. Following this incident, *Metro* was banned for "offending public morals". After a long trial in 2012, *Metro* was republished in Egypt.\(^{269}\)


\(^{1}\) An expression referring to the spectrum of public opinion in the Arab world, often as opposed or contrasted to the opinions of Arab governments. Source: Thomas Friedman. “Under the Arab Street”. NYT times (2002).


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For many years the Arab creative producers self-censored their work to avoid trouble with the government.\footnote{Tariq Alrimawi, “The Arab Animation Spring: How Have Arab Animation Artists Used the Power of YouTube and Social Media in Response to the Recent Arab Revolution?”. International Conference on Illustration & Animation (2013).} The proliferation of social media and fall of dictatorial regimes including Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt during the Arab Spring (2010-2012), weakened censorship and expanded the use of comics and cartoons to communicate the messages of the “Arab street”.\footnote{Emanuela De Blasio, “Comics in the Arab world: Birth and Spread of a New Literary Genre”. Anaquel de Estudios Árabes (2020). DOI: \url{https://doi.org/10.5209/anqe.67162}} YouTube and social media became the main platform for Arab animation artists to distribute their political works during the ‘Arab Spring’ in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria and elsewhere in the Middle East since 2011.

In 2006 “3alarasi” (عتاراسي) emerged as a studio for animated cartoons, caricature, audio productions, and articles, with users generated & sharing of content: Games, videos, audios and photos, with many social networking features. “3alarasi” literally means “on my

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\footnote{Tariq Alrimawi, “The Arab Animation Spring: How Have Arab Animation Artists Used the Power of YouTube and Social Media in Response to the Recent Arab Revolution?”. International Conference on Illustration & Animation (2013).}
\end{thebibliography}
head” and colloquially means “I accept with great pleasure” in local Jordanian dialect. The show is about two Jordanians, 3awad Abu Shiffeh known as “M3allem”, and his friend Jabr Qawanis, who share a life of mayhem revealing the realities of Jordanian life through ironic and controversial comedy and behavioral observation.

![Enta M3ALLEM © 3alarasi 2006](image)


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Enta M3ALLEM © 3alarasi 2006
The Arab animation studio “Kharabeesh” (‘scribbles’ in Arabic) started in 2008 as a small production house based in Aman, Jordan, producing social animated videos through simple quality animation, and then posting them on the internet for free to watch, claiming that Arab animation should not wait for funding and censorship from the Government and non-profit organizations. The studio produced many satirical political clips and music videos featuring Arab political figures, which received significant international establishment news media attention during the Arab Spring and reached large audiences becoming one of the most popular Arab YouTube cartoon channels in the Middle East and North Africa.

Commented [10]: Between January 30, 2011 and February 1, 2011, Kharabeesh released two animated shorts depicting then Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak addressing the Egyptian people following the ousting of Tunisian President Ben Ali. In the first animated video of the series, which as of April 8, 2012 has over 1,800,000 views on YouTube, Hosni Mubarak addresses the Egyptian people in Egyptian Colloquial Arabic, a clear departure from the public speeches he had recently given at the time, which were noted to have been delivered solely in Modern Standard Arabic. The caricatured Mubarak offers trivial solutions to the Egyptian people and pledges not to leave his position, before punched off his podium by a fist representing "the People." In the second video of the series, Mubarak addresses an angry mob, ignoring their chants demanding that he step down. A week later, Kharabeesh launched the third and final video of the series, which shows Mubarak receiving phone calls of congratulations from his counterparts abroad; Kharabeesh has also produced videos satirizing Syrian President Bashar al-Assad,[15] the Egyptian Supreme Council of the Armed Forces,[16] and Muammar Gaddafi.[17]

Commented [AH11]: Add founders behind Kharabeesh

Commented [112]: Add more about Kharabeesh’s other animated shows and expansion

Others well-known cartoon characters who reflect and lampoon Jordanian society include 3la Rasi’s Awad abu sheffeh and Jaber Gawanes, or Khaffash, who “isn’t any other Bedouin” both produced by Kharabeesh.


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In 2013, 19-year-old Deena Mohamed published the first strip of her comic book hero Qahera, the “witty hijabi superhero who fights crime and prejudice on the streets of Egypt”. In creating a strong yet feminine female hero, and a balance of modesty and justice, Mohamed delivered a character critical of Arab society and the unnecessary problems it creates for women under patriarchy and traditionalist values, including sexual harassment and gender discrimination. Deena’s Egyptian urban fantasy trilogy, set for English publication by Pantheon books in 2022.

Marjane Satrapi’s “Persepolis” is an autobiographical series which depicts her childhood up to her early adult years in Iran during and after the Islamic Revolution. It was first published as an award-winning graphic novel and scaled to an animated feature film with a revenue of $15.5 million. It helped expose an international audience to the perspectives of Iranians and women. Persepolis was initially banned in Lebanon after some clerics found it “offensive to Iran and Islam.” The ban was later revoked after an outcry in Lebanese intellectual and political

Commented [113]: Add: Sha3bia “تنوع شعبية الكرتون,” Watani Salem “وطنى سلام,” Meaw “malıأم.”

Commented [114]: Maybe talk about Deena’s 2nd graphic novel too

Commented [115]: Maybe add section about Ms. Marvel (Kamala Khan) muslim marvel superhero, muslim representation

circles. Though it drew official objections from the Iranian government, the film was allowed to be screened in Tehran albeit with six scenes censored due to sexual content. Additionally, in 2006 *Persepolis* became part of the cadet’s curriculum at West Point U.S. Military Academy.

In 2008 Miriam Libicki published a graphic novel cataloguing her experience serving in the Israel Defense Force during the 2nd Intifada. “An American-Jewish girl from a religious home with the tendency to fall in love with anything that moves, enlists in the Israeli army (IDF) in the summer of 2000, against everyone’s better judgement. Her Hebrew’s not great, she is shy and passive, and if that weren’t enough, the Al Aqsa uprising erupts one month into her service. Will

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Miriam survive threats of terrorism, the rough IDF culture, and not least, her horrible taste in men.²⁷⁸

In the autobiographical travelogue, “How to Understand Israel in 60 Days or Less”, Sarah Glidden is a progressive Jewish American twenty-something who is both vocal and critical of Israeli politics. When a debate with her mother prods her to sign up for a Birthright Israel tour, Glidden expects to find objective facts to support her strong opinions. During her two weeks in Israel, Glidden takes advantage of the opportunity to ask the people she meets about the fraught and complex issue of the Israeli-Palestinian issue which lead her to question her preconceptions.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁹ http://sarahglidden.com/how-to-understand-israel-in-60-days-or-less/
“Diaspora Boy: Comics on Crisis in America and Israel” offers a profane, subsercive, and humorous perspective on life in the Jewish Diaspora and its relation to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, reflecting the schisms, hypocrisies, beauty, and strangeness of Judaism in an age of unparalleled power and influence. Progressive Columnist and Professor of Journalism and Political Science Peter Beinart wrote that Valley’s cartoons aren’t only raucously funny. They constitute a searing indictment of the moral corruption of organized American Jewish life in our age.” In contrast NYTimes columnist Bret Stephen described Valley’s work as “Grotesque. ... Wretched” and former President of the Anti-Defamation League Abe Foxman called it, “Bigoted, unfunny.”
In “Footnotes in Gaza” Joe Sacco tries to understand what happened during the 1956 Suez Crisis in the towns of Khan Younis and Rafah in the Gaza Strip in which nearly 400 Palestinians were killed. “Footnotes in Gaza”, published in 2009, along with Sacco’s earlier work “Palestine”, published between 1993 and 1995, are among the first examples of “comics journalism”. Because it is already difficult to objectively portray reality in journalism and documentaries, using illustration to do so allows for more creative freedom. These works reveal comics to be an effective medium to address complex and controversial subjects including even the Israel/Palestine issue. However, as Dr. Chantal Catherine Michel notes, though Sacco demonstrates a critical distance from his interviewees by mentioning inconsistencies in their
accounts and forefronts his approach and research methods, “Footnotes in Gaza” influences the reader into believing that Sacco’s depictions and interpretations are essential truths.\textsuperscript{280}

In \textit{Jerusalem: Chronicles from the Holy City}, comics journalist Guy Delisle documents the life of his family who have travelled there as part of his spouse’s work with \textit{Médecins Sans Frontières} (Doctors Without Borders). Situated in the eastern part of Jerusalem, Delisle finds himself situated on the precise ground of conflict detailing the lives of people on land with a disputed border and what it means to revere a sacred city.

Similarly, “Welcome to the New World,” was a 2017, New York Times, Pulitzer Prize-winning series chronicling a Syrian refugee family as they adjusted to life in the United States, and “Madaya Mom” was a joint production between ABC News and Marvel, reporting the Syrian Civil Conflict through comics and incorporating it into a curriculum for students.  

282 https://abcnews.go.com/International/fullpage/madaya-mom-42363064
Comics and animation are particularly useful mediums for retelling the people’s stories which weren’t visually well-documented, or due to the volatility of the environment as the case of Zabou Breitman and Eléa Gobbé-Mévellec’s “The Swallows of Kabul” based on the best-selling, award-winning novel by Yasmina Khadra.

“Waltz with Bashir” is a 2008 Israeli animated feature documentary written, produced, and directed by Ari Folman with Animation Direction by Yoni Goodman and Art Direction from David Polonsky. It depicts Folman in his search for lost memories of his traumatic experience as a soldier in the 1982 Lebanon War. It grossed over $11 million against a production budget of only $2 million and won a Golden Globe Award for Best Foreign Language Film. The film was banned in several Arab countries with its harshest critics in Lebanon. However, the film was screened in Beirut in 2009 for a 90-person audience and many other private screenings.
followed. Unofficial copies became available in the country as well.\textsuperscript{283} The animation style of the documentary allows such realities of war and trauma to be expressed for the audience to understand its messages in unique, visceral ways. Folman and Polonsky cited Joe Sacco’s work as a major influence and adapted \textit{Waltz with Bashir} into a graphic novel in 2009.\textsuperscript{284}

In 2009, Yoni Goodman directed “Closed Zone”, a 90 second animation produced by Gisha – Legal Center for Freedom of Movement, calling for the opening Gaza’s borders.\textsuperscript{285}

\textsuperscript{283} Anderman, Nirit. "Israeli film on Lebanon War 'Waltz with Bashir' shown in Beirut", Haaretz (2009).
\textsuperscript{284} Ari Folman (author), David Polonsky (Illustrator), \textit{Waltz with Bashir: A Lebanon War Story} (Atlantic Books, 1 March 2009). ISBN 978-1-84887-068-0
In 2019, Folman and Polonsky adapted “The Diary of Anne Frank” into a graphic novel and in 2021 the Bridgit Folman Films Gang produced “Where Is Anne Frank” the animated feature film. The Anne Frank Fonds Basel, which was founded by Anne’s father Otto Frank after the war, approached Folman in 2013 with the idea of an animation movie. Animation was deemed to be the most effective medium to appeal to a new generation and communicate the links between the Holocaust, discrimination, and antisemitism.

In 2013, the IDF produced “Hamas in Comics: Terror and Tyranny in Gaza”, a comic book created for public relations, portraying how “Hamas has vilified the Jewish people, indoctrinated Gaza’s children and attacked Israel with suicide bombings and rockets.”

Commented [119]: Maybe add the Anne Frank animated feature film was first made in 1998 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qAIRFyR6NyQ&ab_channel=AnneFrank%27sDiary-FeatureAnimatedFilm Awarded the Children’s Jury Award at the Chicago International Children’s Festival. « The Film has moved me and I want to congratulate you for the high standard and sensibility in producing this film. I am sure it will be successful not only with the young audiences, but also for the elder generations. » Buddy ELIAS, President, ANNE FRANK FONDS, 1998 A LETTER BY Simon WIESENTHAL I have now viewed the English version of your film based on the Diary of Anne frank. Thank you for sending me the tape. I must admit that at first had my doubts whether an animated film could do justice to Anne Frank’s Diary. I was therefore pleasantly surprised upon viewing it that the film doesn’t trivialize the story of Anne Frank and makes for exciting viewing. This depiction of the growing up of a vivacious young girl in very difficult and extremely threatening surroundings will touch the hearts of young viewers—and will hopefully lead them to be wary of all signs of collective hatred, racism and anti-Semitism. It is good that with such well-done animated film more young people can be reached than would be the case with the book alone. With best regards, Sincerely, Simon WIESENTHAL “No previous adaptations of Anne Frank’s Diary have done so with the imagination and sensitivity that characterize the animated film ANNE FRANK’S DIARY. The attendant music manages to be both unobstructive and haunting at the same time. This inspiring and poignant film is a remarkable tribute to Anne Frank.” -Carol Ann Lee (Historian, author of ‘Anne Frank: A biography’) “...The highly realistic animation offers suspenseful touches and unusual points of view, and the music by Carine Gutlerner is excellent: spare and evocative.” -Reader, Chicago " An animated version of Anne Frank’s famous diaries that make her story easily accessible for a new generation without losing the power of the original text. (...) Most moving is Anne’s internal life, her reaction to their persecution, and subsequent life of total isolation, silence, terror and ultimately the positive and humanitarian attitude she is able to maintain. Complemented by cutting edge animation, the film’s most significant success is its ability to use the diary entries to create an Anne Frank who is compelling and endearing without being maudlin. " Yoshua Ford, Washington Film Festival " Animated “ANNE FRANK” retells story superbly. The movie is an achievement on several levels. Its aesthetic scheme is simple and unadorned enough to remind us that is a story of ordinary people thrust in into extraordinary circumstances, yet it’s also gorgeous enough to carry us through its feature length. Its slate of colors and simple but inviting composition suggest paintings..."
In 1998 DreamWorks produced the animated musical "The Prince of Egypt" based on the book of exodus. It received an academy award for best original song and generated a revenue of $148.6 million. DreamWorks consulted with Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and Arab authorities to make the film more accurate and faithful to the original story. Jeffery Katzenberg, David Geffen, and Steven Spielberg led the production; three Jewish men. However, *The Prince of Egypt* was banned in the Maldives and Malaysia on the grounds that prophets cannot be depicted in media. In addition to the depiction of the prophet Moses, it was also banned in
Egypt for the unflattering depiction of Egyptian civilization and fallacy that Jewish slaves built
the pyramids (Jews were enslaved in Egypt but they did not build the pyramids). 289, 290

In 2000, DreamWorks released “Joseph King of Dreams” to home-video by executive
producers Penney Finkelman, Steve Hickner, and Jeffrey Katzenberg. It tells the story of Joseph
from the Book of Genesis, who was sold to slavery by his brothers who were jealous of his
prophetic abilities to analyze dreams and of his being their fathers' favorite and goes on to
become second in command to the Pharaoh and the brothers redeem themselves and reunite.

The first Israeli animated feature film was the 1961 stop-motion “Joseph and the Dreamer”, directed, animated and produced by Polish-Australian-Israeli animator Yoram Gross (1926-2005) and his wife Alina.”
In 2012, American animator Nina Paley released a satirical animated music video visualizing the graphic history of conflict over “the holy land”, set to “The Exodus Song composed and performed by Ernst Gold, with added lyrics by Pat Boone, sung by Andy Williams, as part of her work-in-progress feature film. By 2014 the scene had received 10 million views, with more viewers added during every news cycle highlighting the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.  

After six years of work, a self-identifying anti-Zionist, atheist American Jew, Nina Paley, directed, produced and animated a 78-minute animated called “Seder Masochism” in 2018, a musical comedy that loosely follows a traditional Passover Seder, events from the Book of Exodus are retold by Moses, Aharon, the Angel of Death, Jesus, and the director’s own father.  

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But there’s another side to this story: that of the Goddess, humankind’s original deity. Seder-Masochism resurrects the Great Mother in a tragic struggle against the forces of Patriarchy.

Due to her self-reliance, talent, and use of public domain for songs and distribution as well as friends and family, Paley was able to produce Seder Masochism for a mere $20,000.292

Spacetoon, established in 2000, is a free-to-air Arabic kids’ channel that broadcasts to more than 22 countries, reaching more than 200 million viewers. Spacetoon offers animated and live-action content tailored to the region’s sensitive cultural values and owns the rights of the largest library of Arabic-dubbed animated cartoons in the Arab world.293 By June 29th, 2021, Spacetoon’s YouTube channel had over six million subscribers and 400 million views, and 26.8


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The dubbing of predominantly American and Japanese cartoons has presented challenges for companies like Spacetoon both in regard to language with the use of Modern Standard Arabic (al-Fusha) versus popular dialects like Egyptian or Levantine (Shami) or local dialects as well as the morality of content. Al-Fusha has commonly been used for dubbing foreign cartoons in the Arab world but can come across like the equivalent Shakespearian English which can sound unnatural and be challenging for kids. The content has often been altered to accommodate the cultural and religious values of the Arab world, which can distort the plot.

In 2001, the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia issued a fatwa banning the Pokémon franchise due to its reference to evolution, and for promoting gambling, the Shinto religion of Japan, Christianity, Freemasonry and “global Zionism”.

However, despite the fatwa, Pokémon and other American and Japanese cartoons of the 90s and early 2000s became beloved by children across the Middle East. As an example of this popularity, Al Salam Media Group, a production company based in Kuwait, produced several theatrical musicals based on American and Japanese cartoon characters including a Pokémon-Detective Conan crossover musical, “Conan in the Land of Pokémon”.

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296 “Saudi revives fatwa on ‘Zionism-promoting’ Pokemon”. The Times of Israel (2016).

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Randa Ayaoubi, a Harvard MBA graduate, later voted 11th most influential woman in the Middle East 2007 (Economist Magazine), 12th most influential woman in the MENA 2010 (Arabian Business), and 25 Most Powerful Women in Global TV 2014 (Hollywood Reporter), founded Rubicon Holding Group in 1994 in Amman, Jordan. Ayoubi’s goal was “to produce more programs so in the future children in Europe, the US or Asia might grow up watching Arabic shows dubbed in English, rather than the other way round” and foster an “Arab Renaissance”. Rubicon produced successful animated content including “Tareq wa Shireen” (2010) and “Ben & Izzy” (2008), an animated series about two boys, one American and one Jordanian, who meet at an archeological dig in Jordan and are transported back in time, which aired on Cartoon Network Arabia, and animated feature film, Postman Pat: The Movie.

Commented [120]: Maybe talk more about “Ben and Izzy” was an act of animated cultural diplomacy: Ben & Izzy is a Jordanian computer-animated children’s television series, directed by Glenn Chaika. Produced by Rubicon, a rising educational and CGI animation company, the series followed the adventures and friendship of two preteen boys, Ben and Izzy are from the United States and Jordan respectively; a desert genie called Yasmine takes the form of a young girl. Although produced in Jordan, it was primarily released in English for international purposes before its official Arabic dub in 2008. The series was created primarily to entertain, but also to educate viewers about aspects of Arab history and how it affected Western culture. These are reflected in the bond between the American Ben and the Jordanian Izzy. Paolo Parmiggiani and Giannalberto Bendazzi. “Animation, A World History. Volume III, Contemporary Times”. CRC Press, Focal Press, Taylor & Francis Group (2017).

Maybe add that it was heavily supported by Queen Rania who’s American and Palestinian

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However, Rubicon’s animation division fell apart due to short-term-cash-flow problems when they bit off more than they could chew”, betting on a feature film production deal based on Sir Paul McCartney’s *High in the Clouds* (which fell through) and investing $1 billion in a theme park based on par with Disneyland, without a big enough cache of intellectual property, fanbase, and revenue stream, to sustain the initiatives.\(^{302}\)

![Ben & Izzy](https://rubiconco.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Ben_Izzy1.png) \(\text{“Ben & Izzy” Copyright © Rubicon Group Holdings.}\)

Emad Hajjaj is a modern political cartoonist born in the Jordan-controlled West Bank in 1967. His work, which covers a wide range of topics including Arab affairs, gender equality, and civil society has been published by Al Rai, Alaraby Aljadeed, Alghad Newspaper, and the Jordan Times daily and earned him two Dubai Press Awards and recognition in Arabian Business Magazine’s “500 Most Influential Figures in the Arab World”. In 1993, Emad created “Abu Mahjoob”, a cartoon character inspired by his father, who represents the common Jordanian man.\(^{303}\) Through Abu Mahjoob, Emad Hajjaj speaks to and for the people of Jordan about every day political, social, and cultural concerns. Since 2004, Abu Mahjoob has appeared on Jordanian TV as an animated character, produced by Tomandora Productions and Void Studioz. Though


Emad is often considered a “speaker of the people”, that doesn’t mean his work is appreciated by everyone. Hajjaj has been collared to court over a 2017 portrayal of Jesus Christ “disowning” the Greek Orthodox church leader, fired for an unflattering depiction of the King of Jordan in 2000, received death threats from ISIS, was sent to prison under the cybercrime law after publishing a caricature criticizing the Israel-United Arab Emirates peace agreement though he was reportedly released after four days.\textsuperscript{304}

![Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed after the Israel-UAE peace agreement Copyright © Emad Hajjaj 2020.](image)

Emad’s brother, Osama Hajjaj, is also a popular cartoonist in Jordanian and Arab society, which he expresses his opinions and lived experience on through his characters “‘Ata’ and ‘Atwa’” (عطا وعطاً) He has worked for several newspapers including Alquds, newspapers Al Mar’a, Al Belad, Al Dustour, Al Ittihad of Abu Dhabi newspapers, Al Ray, Charlie Hebdo, as well as “Ala Al Hawa Sawa” on Jordan TV, CagleCartoons, and CartoonMovement.\textsuperscript{305}

\textsuperscript{304} The New Arab Staff. “Jordan releases cartoonist Emad Hajjaj after days of arrest for ‘offending’ the UAE”. The New Arab (2020).

\textsuperscript{305} https://cartoonmovement.com/cartoonist/658

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Osama claims to have been fired for his cartoons of the King of Jordan and briefly jailed for cartoons depicting the Muslim Brotherhood.\footnote{Rima Maktabi. “Brothers’ political cartoons break taboos”, CNN (2011).}

In the early 2000s the Syrian government-run National Film Organization (NFO) started to show an interest in animation. As a result, several co-productions between state and independent studios saw the light of day.\footnote{Stephanie Van de Peer. “Small Birds, Big Quest: How “The Jasmine Birds” Conveys Overcoming a Dictator and a Deadly Virus in Syria”. Animation Studies (2020): https://blog.animationstudies.org/?p=3923} The first Syrian animated Feature Film, “The Jar: A Tale From the East”, was produced in 2001, a story about a poor yet virtuous family who discover a lost treasure buried in a jar under their new home. In their quest to return the jar to its rightful owner, a jealous and greedy neighbor who has his eye on the jar foils their attempts to return it. An adventure ensues as the townsfolk try to solve the mystery of the jar.
The second animated feature film to come out of Syria was Razam Hijazi’s “Thread of Life”, which was produced by Tiger Production with the support of the Syrian Cinema Foundation. *Thread of Life* tells the story of a smart young student, Alaa, who is constantly tormented by his classmate, Obaida. His life at home is also difficult; he lives in poverty while his mother works to make ends meet with her sewing. For comfort, Alaa has a barnyard of animals and a special bird friend, Sesame. The struggles of his youth are common, as is his desire to skip ahead in life, to possible better times. When his despair reaches its depths, he is led by a wise old turtle into a tunnel. There, Old Woman Time offers him a magical gift: The Thread of Life. Alaa needs only to tug on the thread to move ahead in life; the length of his tug determining where in time he arrives. As he travels in fast forward through future experiences and events, Alaa realizes that perhaps he should be careful what he wishes for.\(^{308}\)

The third Syrian animated feature film was *The Jasmine Birds* in 2009, directed by Sulafa Hijazi, Razam’s sister. Sulafa Hijazi is a Director, visual and Multimedia artist from Damascus, Syria. Hijazi began her career as a writer and director of animation and other multimedia production, with a particular focus on children’s education, social development. Her internationally award-winning animation and multimedia productions became very popular among Arab children and youth and distributed across major platforms. *The Jasmine Birds* focuses on a settlement of so-called jasmine birds, and the look of the birds is based on the common sparrow, a species pervasive in Damascus. The birds’ fictional species, as jasmine

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\(^{308}\) Trailer: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_pxHjasxYU&ab_channel=cinemasyria](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_pxHjasxYU&ab_channel=cinemasyria)
birds, is a direct reference to the past glory and beauty of Damascus, known as the jasmine city. As a common sparrow and an orphan, Gaith represents the everyman, the common people, whose lives and preoccupations are of no concern to those in power. Sulafa designed the bird characters had to be recognizable as local and Arab, for her young Syrian audience. She emphasized typical Arab physical characteristics such as thick brows for the male characters, while mascara and *kohl* eyeliner are used on the female characters’ eyes. She also employed geometric, Islamic design and calligraphy was inspiration for the decorations and the texture of the backgrounds. This sensitivity towards the diversity in meaning of the symbols and signs used in her animated film reveals a concern with local identity formation and displays the subtle impact designs have upon their narrative power. Hijazi was also a founding member of Spacetoon, ‘the first free Arabic satellite channel for kids’ in 2000. In 2010 she established Bluedar, a digital art production house, started between Damascus and Beirut and moved to Berlin. Hijazi published digital artworks criticizing the political and social oppression surrounding the Syrian Civil War and Refugee Crisis which have been featured by art institutions around the world.

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In 2006 Animation Lab, an animation studio backed by Jerusalem Venture Partners (JVP) launched with an ambitious plan to make Jerusalem a hub of international animation, technology, and creativity. Animation Lab brought animation veterans from around the world to Jerusalem to work with budding Israeli talent, beginning with a feature film project, “The Wild Bunch”, a story about the struggle of Garden plants against an army of genetically modified corn, originally by screenwriter Phillip LaZebnick, known for *The Prince of Egypt*, *Pocahontas*, and *Mulan*. The project ultimately failed largely because of problems with the...
In 2012 couple Nir Gerber and Gali Edelbaum posted “Baruch and the Three Wishes” on YouTube, an animated skit about a turd pleading not to be flushed down the toilet. In return, the turd offers to grant Baruch three wishes, as in Pushkin’s famous tale of the fisherman and the golden fish. The clip attracted more than 250,000 views and positive buzz, leading the duo to post more clips, including “Migrating Birds,” about a flock of birds that goes astray because of the faulty navigation of a juvenile stoner-bird; “Hilik the Ghost,” about a ghost who gets fed up with haunting the showers of famous women since he’s unable to get sexual satisfaction; and “A Dog’s Life,” about a dog who sniffs at a pile of droppings, is unjustly accused of being

311 Talia Tsur: Animation Lab animator.
312 Lewie Kerr: Animation Lab storyboard artist.

Commented [123]: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QYZIAGknIPo&ab_channel=sesstudio
2012 Ahmad Saleh
2016 Ahmad Saleh
From the film ‘Ayny – My Second Eye’
responsible for it, and gets into a shouting match with a city inspector. Nir and Gali were then contacted by the legendary “Eretz Nehederet” (“A Wonderful Land”) satire show, bringing their animated shorts to the Israeli mainstream in a segment called “Pninat Litof” (“Petting Corner”) (ףוטיל תניפ).\(^{313}\)

Nir and Gali later developed “Sima ve Moshe,” a series of short sitcoms centering on a stereotypical wife-beating, sunflower seed-spitting Beitar Jerusalem Football fan. Sima ve

\(^{313}\) https://www.mako.co.il/tv-erez-nehederet/season11-nir-gali

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Moshe received a negative reaction for making the country look bad and normalizing domestic abuse and was removed from YouTube.

“Being Solomon” was a 2017 Israeli-Hungarian animated feature co-production directed by Hanan Kaminski. It follows the young King Solomon, the Arab Princess Naama and the Queen of Sheba, who join forces against the King of Demons, Asmodeus, who is trying to seize their kingdoms. However, the film was criticized for straying too far from the biblical narrative.

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314 https://www.atzuma.co.il/sima
316 https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3887158/

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In 1995, Kaminski co-directed the animated feature “The Real Shlemiel” AKA “Aaron’s Magic Village”, a co-production between Germany, Israel, Hungary, and France based on Nobel Laureate Isaac Bashevis Singer’s Stories for Children. It’s premise: “When the Almighty distributed wisdom and stupidity in the newly created world, all the stupidity of the world through the fault of a negligent angel fell on the small village of Helm, and since then every inhabitant of this village has been an example of world stupidity. Once his nephew Aaron comes to the inhabitant of this village Shlemelyu, all the wealth of which is the goat Zlata. And as luck would have it, it was at this time that the evil sorcerer decides to attack Helm with the
monster he created. Who, if not Aaron, will have to save the negligent inhabitants from the
impending threat?\[1\]

The UAE has emerged as a prominent source of animation content in the region.\[2\] In
2015, United Arab Emirates based animation studio “Barajoun Entertainment” produced and
directed by Ayman Jamal, launched “Bilal: A New Breed of Hero”, a full animated feature
depicting the life of Bilal ibn Rabah, a follower of the Prophet Mohamad who was freed from
slavery and became one of the first Mua’dhin\[1\] circa 632 AD.\[3\] Bilal won “Best Inspiring Movie”
at the 2016 Cannes Film Festival and made a significant influence in the region and the world

\[1\] http://israel-pozitiv.narod.ru/index/0-2


\[3\] Mua’dhin – The one who performs the Muslim call to prayer


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Sitcom animations have since long been a powerful medium of social and political criticism in the Western world. Series such as The Simpsons and South Park gained huge popularity among children and adults alike, and inspired many adaptations around the globe. However, it took a long time for this popular format to reach the Arab world, a culturally conservative geo-cultural region often characterized by strict political censorship. Since the early 2000s, producers from several Arab countries including Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE create their own local sitcom animations, often characterized by hyper-reflexivity and intertextuality with local popular culture, containing up-to-date satirical

Commented [AH124]: Maybe add: “Political and social satire has been historically persistent in many Arab countries (Kishtainy 1985). Similarly to their peers in other post-colonial countries, Arab producers of parody blend global formats with local traditions when addressing and mediating national fissures (Baym and Jones 2012: 8–9). Ever since the emergence of the Arab Renaissance (al-Nahda) in the late 19th century, new mediums (papers, cinema, radio, television) and adapted genres and formats (novels, cartoons, movies, series) became forums for critical ideas.” From: Omar Adam Sayfo. “Arab sitcom animations as platforms for satire”. John Benjamins Publishing Company (2015): p. 1.
reflections on public life and even political affairs.

The Simpsons debuted on the Saudi Arabian MBC channel during Ramadan 2005. Aware of the cultural sensitiveness of Arab audiences, the translators did their best to adapt the American series to the regional environment. Running as al-Shamshoon, Bart was renamed as Badr, while Homer’s new name was Omar, and he drank soda instead of beer and ate barbequed Egyptian beef sausages instead of hot dogs. Stripped of culturally sensitive topics – many of them otherwise a source of amusement – al-Shamshoon failed to attract audiences (el-Rashidi 2005). Not much later, however, home grown animated sitcoms became one of the most popular and widespread genres in the Arab world.120

Emirati animator Mohammed Saeed Harib’s ongoing cartoon series “Freej” – meaning “neighborhood” in Emirati Arabic – with the tagline “the fun old girls, is about four old Emirati women, Um Saeed, the wise linchpin; Um Allawi, the intellectual; Um Saloom, the benign dimwit; and Um Khammas, the crude one, trying to live their lives in a secluded neighborhood in the midst of an ever-expanding Dubai, tackling social issues their own way. Harib launched Lammtara Pictures in 2005 and Freej has enthralled audiences with its local authenticity and candid wit since its premier Ramadan 2006. Freej was inspired during a class at Northeastern University, where Harib studied art and animation. Harib explains: “in one of the classes at university our professor asked us to come up with a superhero “from your culture”.

(...) Our grandfathers used to go pearl diving for six to seven months. The female figures had to

raise six to seven kids in a very harsh financial environment and climate. She used to teach the kids, she used to work, so she was the superhero. On top of that she looked very unique, thanks to the mask she was wearing. Hence my first character was born.”

Sha’abiyat al Kartoon premiered in 2008 by Haidar Mohammed of Fanar Productions and Amer Kokh of Crazy Piranha Entertainment. Sha’abiyat, a word that means “rural neighborhood” in Arabic, follows the lives of a group of families and individuals living in a small Dubai neighborhood. There are 24 characters from countries throughout Africa, the Middle East, and the Indian subcontinent. The main characters are Shambee and Bo Mhayer. Shambee a middle-class Dad who can’t get any respect due to his dim-witted ways. Bo Mhayer is a real Bedouin whose rugged views formed by the tough lessons of the desert, leave him both

confused by and slightly distrustful of Dubai. Through these characters, the series manages to examine some of the contentious issues bubbling beneath Emirati society. In contrast with Freej, Sha’abiyat exposes more of Dubai’s melting pot with dialogue fusing local and regional dialect and English.\(^{322, 323}\)

In one of the episodes, Shambee, one of the main characters, feels that his friends reject him on account of his Iranian-sounding family name, and he therefore decides to change his name to a “proper” Emirati name. However, he is incapable of acting like a real Bedouin and turns out to be a terrible Bedouin poet, and he therefore abandons his plan.

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Several Arab sitcom animations followed this path, among them *Yowmiyyat Bou Quatada wa Bou Nabeel* [The Diary of Bu Qatada and Bu Nabeel], *Youn wa Youm* [Day and Day], which also reflect on the complex social mosaic of their country by using stereotyped visual presentation and different dialects. The diverse situational characters come together to create what Nichola Dobson calls a “constructed reality” (Dobson 2003: 86). The animation also employs what Matheson defines as hyper-irony, a type of humor that prompts the audience not only to recognize the stereotypes that society has created, but also to laugh at themselves (Irwin, Conrad and Skolbe 2001: 108–25).

*Block 13* (Arabic: ﻗﻄﻠﺔ ١٣) is Kuwaiti adaptation of the American adult animated television series *South Park*. Produced by Sami Al-Khars and Nawaf Al Shammari of *Farooha Media*, *Block 13* was the first animated TV sitcom produced in the Persian Gulf, airing on *al-Watan TV* from 2000 to 2003. The series follows five young boys: Abboud, a chubby boy who dislikes his little sister Farooha, Azzouz, a good-hearted but slightly strange boy, Hammoud, a handsome teacher’s pet, and finally Saloom, an impoverished child that sells bubble gum for money. The series dealt with many issues concerning the Kuwaiti population through humor, avoiding controversial issues such as sexuality or politics.325

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325 https://www.imdb.com/title/tt9908414/
Ahmed and Salim is an animated web series created by Or Paz and Tom Trager – together known as “Sugar Zaza” – between 2009 and 2011 from an apartment in Herzliya, originally attracting over 2 million views and worldwide fans. The series is a satirical parody on religious fundamentalists, or, as the creators define it: “A sitcom about terrorists”. The show drew critical attention from the Arabic press. The United Arab Emirates has banned Ahmed and Salim. Palestinian bloggers have denounced it. YouTube removed one of the first six episodes and warned the creators that it could ban the entire series if new episodes are too offensive. Despite the show’s offensive nature, many of Ahmed and Salim’s Facebook friends are in fact Muslims and many of the show’s fans are in Arab countries. The show developed a “cult following” in Israel and its debut episode, in which


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the father “bemoans the fact that his sons haven’t gone off on a suicide mission and killed lots of Jews,” attracted 600,000 viewers on YouTube.\textsuperscript{329} Though the show appears very anti-Islamic, Trager and Paz claim to have no political agenda, just “making people laugh”.

\textit{M.K. 22} (Hebrew: ק.מ\textsuperscript{22} - Mem Qoph 22, which stands for “machane keva”, (“permanent [military] camp”), while the words “Mem Qoph 22” might sound like “milkud 22”, the Hebrew translation for the idiom catch-22 is an Israeli animated sitcom, revolving around the adventures of soldiers in a fictional IDF military base hosting the so-called “Israeli doomsday weapon”, dealing with Israel Defense Forces behavior and culture, and with general issues and

\textsuperscript{329} Nissenbaum, Dion. “Humor or hate? Groups see Israeli cartoon differently.”\textit{ Archived} 3 November 2010 at the Wayback Machine, Columbus Ledger-Enquirer, 23 April 2009.
current events of Israeli society, derived from the experiences of the show’s creators, Yaron Niski and Doron Tzur.  

The show debuted in March 2004 through production company Shortcut Playground, becoming the first prime time animated series in Israeli television, and was later rebroadcast partly censored on Channel 2. The show won the Israeli Television Academy Award for Best Comedy Series. Despite gaining popularity and critical acclaim, the negotiations for a second season failed, making the first 10-episode season the only one thus far.

The series follows main characters: Corporal Shlomi Hanukkah: A narrow-minded Mizrahi "ars" and “kombinator” ("scam artist") and his friend, Corporal Itai Shulman, an Ashkenazi nerd. As well as their Commander, Gabriel Shukrun, a stupid, stubborn and manipulative officer, Michal Levinstein: a handicapped volunteer, generally hated by all other involuntary soldiers for her self-righteousness, and Abed Abu Jamal: an Israeli Arab living near the base. He appears to be Shukrun’s humble friend, while secretly being a terrorist training bionic shahid sheep. In the show he represents the “fifth column Israeli Arabs” stereotype.

The show’s initial goal was “to combine the style of South Park with local cult such
as *Giv’at Haifon*, an Israeli cult-comedy film produced in 1976, which tells the story of a reserves company, watching the Egyptian border in Sinai.\textsuperscript{334}

The team also produced a cool music video:

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{image1}
\caption{“M.K. 22” © Keshet, Shortcut Playground 2004}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{image2}
\caption{“Always the Tune” by Sharona and Daniella Pick © Keshet, Shortcut Playground 2004}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{334} “The Tzahal we all loved to hate” (in Hebrew). *Nana* 10, 2003-06-03. Retrieved 2021-10-03.

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Block 13, Ahmed and Sali, and M.K. 22 were all inspired both artistically and humoristically by *South Park*, created by Trey Parker and Matt Stone (who happens to be a Jew). *Sugar Zaza* created another animated series called *The Shtreimels*, which pokes fun at ultra-orthodox in a similarly crude manner. Beware very crude...

“Nahfat Ailetna” (" jouer de notre famille") is an animated comedy series that deals with many social issues and phenomena in daily Jordanian life, following the funny situations and strange events of the Abu Raad family. The series was created in 2011 by Jordan-based animation studio *Sketch in Motion* led by Tamer Qarrain, a serial entrepreneur (Founder of Media Plus and BeeLabs).
In January 2021, Spacetoons launched “The Moshaya family Animation”, based on “The Moshaya Family”, a homegrown YouTube series that became the biggest family content creator in the Middle East consisted of 13 episodes (10-12 minutes each), with the daily life adventures and Arab values-based family content.

Pan-Arab channels such as MBC3 and Al-Jazeera Children’s Channel (JCC) have presented geolinguistically relevant series such as Saladin: The Animated Series as well as educational material.  

In 2017, Our Family Life Blog/Website, a leading parenting website in the Middle East, and Digitales, a Jordan based animation studio, partnered to pioneer an innovative animated sitcom model with writers include parents, educators, and therapists, called “Abu Sanad’s Family Animation”, a wholesome series which addresses family issues such as parenting and community living without shying away from taboo subjects and preconceived notions that permeate social and family systems.

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337 https://www.digitalesmedia.com/portfolio/our-family-life/

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“Cinema Rex” is an Israeli 6-minute animated short created by Eliran Peled and Mayan Engelman, about a Jewish boy and an Arab girl who become friends through their discovery of the magic of films, designed to promote coexistence. The film, intended as a proof of concept for a feature-length film, won the CANAL+ Youth Award at the 2020 Annecy Film Festival. Cinema Rex was produced by the Makor Foundation for Film and Television, the Jerusalem Film and Television Fund, the Israel Film Fund, Mifal HaPayis, the Ministry of Culture and Sport and the Israel Film Council and is currently seeking international investment under Pink Parrot Media and Aldy Pai TLV.

In addition to Manga Productions, Saudi animation production has also stepped up in recent years with Myrkott, an Animation Studio based in Riyadh founded by Faisal Al Amer, Malik Nejer, and Abdulaziz al-Muzaini in 2009. Myrkott offers the irreverent, socially aware satire Masameer, a series about a Dog, and his two mentally unhinged, delusional friends in a corrupt and absurd Arabia, which was developed into an exceptional feature film. Masameer

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PART II: Olive Branch Pictures’ Theory of Change

Introduction

"The Israeli-Palestinian conflict" is regarded as one of the most intractable conflicts in history. Both peoples have legitimate claims of indigeneity to the same land. Both Israeli and Palestinian forces have tragically and unequivocally violated human rights. Eight permanent status issues remain: mutual recognition, security and terrorism, borders, Israeli settlements, Palestinian freedom of movement, Palestinian refugees, control of Jerusalem, holy sites, and water rights. The root cause of this conflict is the clash of competing narratives over identity and land. Decades of war shifted military power to Israel and the conflict towards public relations warfare in social and establishment media.

Commented [132]: Maybe use the terms collective memory and conscious to describe the construction of national identity to relate back to memetics, jung, etc. Like how Jonah phrased it:

- Although there is a significant power imbalance between Israelis and Palestinians, another relevant factor is the role of nationalism. Israelis and Palestinians both genuinely feel a historical connection to the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, but they also uphold separate national consciousnesses. They have separate and distinct collective memories of trauma and have constructed separate national identities through those collective memories. Both peoples care how the sovereign state they reside in within the land represents their narrative and their identity and allows them to practice their right to self-determination independently. In other words, what Israelis and Palestinians are seeking are not just human rights, but also national rights.

https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/how-to-be-progressive-in-the-israeli-palestinian-conflict/?fbclid=IwAR0qP_5qBCyMYxtZBpJDJ80OxqqO0fdXqqqY2ynb5UZc0Kg5xofOHw2Vcasulafa

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channels, Palestinian and Israeli art, literature, theatre and film are used as “weapons of culture” to support competing narratives and promote ideal national images. The Abraham Accords suggest a future of Arab-Israel relations removed from the “question of Palestine”.

In her work, “Panels for Peace: Contributions of Israeli and Palestinian Comics to Peace-Building”, Dr. Chantal Catherine Michel describes the ideological struggle for the representation of ideas, played out in various graphic novel publications depicting aspects of the Israel/Palestine conflict. She asserts that few, if any, publications thus far have been able to separate themselves from their own cultural, political, and religious biases as well as reach the affected audiences, but maintains that if such a publication could be achieved, it would have a noticeable impact in peacebuilding due to the effectiveness of graphic novels as communication tools. According to Michel, graphic literature that does not offer a balanced view of the conflict and neglects the other side, contributes to an entrenchment of the conflict rather than to peacebuilding. She writes, “apparently, neither the great majority of the authors living inside Israel/Palestine, nor the ones living geographically (and culturally) outside of this conflict-area, commented

Commented [133]: Maybe show pictures from Israeli and Palestinian Poster archives

Commented [134]: Maybe add: “The flood of dis-and-misinformation as well as censorship in both social and establishment media on both sides of the conflict resulting from the 2021 Israel-Hamas Crisis, demonstrates the continued need for balanced media on the subject.”


Find more sources

Deleted: positive

Commented [135]: Maybe take out

Deleted: The state of Palestine remains a question

351 Maayan Jaffe-Hoffman. “TikTok intifada is ‘just the tip of the iceberg’”. The Jerusalem Post (26 April 2021).
356 Yuval Ben-Ami. “About Face: Who best explains the case for Israel: an expert on the separation fence, or a rap group? A Foreign Ministry plan that aims to change the country’s advocacy efforts is proving controversial”. Haaretz (2005): https://www.haaretz.com/1.4875039

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seem to be willing to produce comics that could contribute to peace-building or are capable of it. As it is, [Arab-Israeli Conflict Comics] are unfortunately mostly used as a cultural weapon against the other side.” 357 Moreover, in her essay “The Art of Persuasion and Propaganda”, Michel writes, “Being culturally involved in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict means for most people the impossibility of adopting a neutral position. This could, hypothetically, only be possible for those who aren’t culturally involved”. 358 Despite a long history of film and literature about the Arab-Israeli Conflict, none offer full representation and ideological balance both in front of and behind the camera, distributed to the necessary stakeholder audience to foment mutual understanding and trust and stimulate progress.

Olive Branch Pictures Inc

Olive Branch Pictures Inc is an ideologically balanced, representational animation studio for conflict mediation. OBP’s mission is to mitigate the cycles of hatred, violence, xenophobia, and propaganda surrounding large-scale social conflicts.

Olive Branch Pictures Inc. Logo. Designed by Don Daskalo & Andrew Hirsh © Andrew Hirsh.

Philosophy

Our core values are empathy, open-mindedness, and the pursuit of truth. If you want to convince anyone of your perspective, you need to demonstrate you understand and respect theirs or at least the will to try. It isn’t difficult to have empathy for our neighbors, but it isn’t easy to have empathy for those we perceive as enemies. It is also difficult to admit mistakes or wrongdoing, especially if the other party seems unwilling to do the same. But someone has to be the first and a sincere apology can go a long way. It also isn’t easy to be open-minded, it requires the humility to accept that your perspective may be misinformed, and it can create cognitive dissonance to recognize that world views contradictory to your own, may (also) be true. Olive Branch Pictures endeavors to address conflicting group narratives with an open-mindedness derived from Socrates’s notion, “the more I know, the more I know I know nothing.” We must be willing to question our beliefs as well as understand and tolerate the beliefs of others, recognizing that we might learn from them. Being open-minded is necessary for the pursuit of truth, a noble endeavor that can unite people across ideologies.

Olive Branch Pictures was originally inspired in-part by the Taoist Yin Yang, which describes how opposing, distinct ideas and entities are also complementary and interconnected in nature. Olive Branch Pictures asserts that moral and cultural relativism, as well as moral and cultural objectivism, are not necessarily mutually exclusive, that “contradiction is the

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essence of the human condition”, and that there is beauty in ambiguity.\textsuperscript{360, 361} Olive Branch Pictures ponders Rabbi Hillel’s question: “If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself, what am I? If not now, when?”\textsuperscript{362}

Hindus and Buddhists believe in the Karmic cycle. Muslims say “inshallah” – “if Allah wills”. Jews say “bizrat haShem” – “with G-d’s help”. Olive Branch Pictures respects both religious and secular perspectives while accepting a Perennial perspective on religion, that most religious traditions share a single, metaphysical truth or source from which all esoteric and exoteric knowledge and doctrine grow.\textsuperscript{363, 364, 365}

Olive Branch Pictures strives for authenticity. Authenticity, however, does not mean actuality. Authenticity means an internally consistent world, true to itself in scope, depth, and detail. As Aristotle states: “For the purposes of [story] a convincing impossibility is preferable to an unconvincing possibility.”\textsuperscript{366}

Olive Branch Pictures pledges to follow responsible ethical standards when engaging minors.

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\item Dr. Phillip M. Stone (My Grandfather) (1977).
\item Hillel HaZaken, Pirkey Avot, 1:13.
\item Aquinas, Thomas. Summa theologica. Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province. New York: Benziger Brothers, 1911-1925.
\end{thebibliography}
In storytelling, conflict drives the plot forward. As William Ury and Roger Fisher eloquently state: “Conflict is an inevitable and useful part of life. It often leads to change and generates insight. Few injustices are addressed without serious conflict. In the form of business competition, conflict helps create prosperity and it lies at the heart of the democratic process, where the best decisions result not from a superficial consensus but from exploring different points of view and searching for creative solutions.”

It is much harder to hate, persecute, and commit violence against people when their humanity is brought to light and much harder when they are demonized. One of the best ways to humanize “others” is through the humanities – literature, art, music, culture, and language.

People-to-People Approach

In pursuing a people-to-people approach, Olive Branch Pictures recognizes that People-to-people activities cannot occur in a vacuum and must be accompanied by efforts to change injustices at other levels (structural, political, economic). Local community leaders are positioned best to bridge the grassroots and the policy levels. The Collaborative Learning Projects’ “Reflecting on Peace Practice” study found that “programming that focuses on change at the individual level, but that never translates into action at the socio-political level has no

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discernable effect on peace. The reality of people-to-people peacebuilding processes is very slow and rarely deliver highly visible, attributable outcomes. Such outcomes result from cumulative, repeated multiple efforts by a variety of actors and approaches. The most effective people-to-people approach focus on the balance between grassroots community engagement and individual influencers namely community leaders, policymakers, and organic, representational cultural influencers. Due to the viral social media world, we live in, and the entertainment-media nature of this venture, these cultural influencers such as artists, musicians, and actors, will be key to achieving a broad, representational audience, potentially directly contributing to production, and promoting it to their followings.370

Methodology

Olive Branch Pictures strives for subjective balance for lack of objective truth. The core principles guiding Olive Branch Pictures’ methodology are ideological balance and representation. The story development process relies on interdisciplinary research spanning anthropology, theology, psychology, linguistics, history, media, politics, art, etc., a common understanding of humanity, and grassroots stakeholder consultation, especially from youth, as well as a representational team of talented artists, writers, musicians, actors, directors, and comedians and ideologically balanced advisory board of diplomats, religious authorities,


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community leaders, media professionals, academics, and artists, etc. The team and advisory board are selected through ideological spectrum compass testing across gender and ideology as well as expertise and reputation. We apply design thinking methods to brainstorm and validate ideas for character, dialogue, plot, visuals, etc.

Due to the controversy of such intractable conflict, it is unreasonable to assume that imposing representation and ideologically balance will be easy, particularly including more extreme perspectives. To surmount this challenge Olive Branch Pictures supports a cooperative-competitive model through negotiation, compromise, and dialectic to decide the characters, dialogue, background, and action. In a controlled, ideologically balanced system, opposing perspectives should roughly cancel each other out across ideological spectrums to reveal common ground, championing classical liberalism in the pursuit of truth. In order to bring together talent and organizational partners from diverse backgrounds and political perspectives, Olive Branch Pictures will offer: a seat at the roundtable to ensure the accuracy of their representation within the story, jobs and training, funding for non-profit partners, a percentage of profits and return on investment for for-profit companies, and the opportunity to have a positive impact on the situation, in exchange for development assistance, perspective, promotion, credibility, and network access – united by the common pursuit of truth, peace, and

Commented [138]: To navigate controversy & reach diverse stakeholder communities Olive Branch Pictures will:
- Use design thinking methods with statistically-sampled, stakeholder-crowdsourced consultation to brainstorm and validate ideas for character, dialogue, plot, and visuals.
- Produce slightly altered versions of Shira and Amal in different stakeholder dialects i.e., Bedouin, Jerusalemite, Egyptian, etc. to accommodate the culture and perspectives of those communities without sacrificing the core message.
- Feature multiple, interactive storylines allowing the audience to “choose their own adventure”, giving them agency and revealing the fickle nature of narrative in regard to the conflict.

Commented [139]: Could embed miro board to show visuals of what the design thinking methodology would look like

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371 Design thinking is a non-linear, iterative process that teams use to understand users, challenge assumptions, redefine problems and create innovative solutions over five phases: Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype and Test.

372 The Dialectical Method – A method of philosophical discourse that involves some sort of contradictory process between opposing forces. In Platonic dialectics, the two arguments add zero sum. In Hegelian Dialectics, the two sides are synthesized in a combination (Source: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy).
justice. Additionally, if the representatives of these diverse ideologies are confident in their truth, they should have no problem engaging in such discourse, with the confidence that if their ideology is represented accurately within the framework of the narrative, the audience should be able to discern this truth from all the other truths presented. Furthermore, when faced against systemic injustice it can be prudent to change the system from within rather than just working to overthrow the system from outside.

It is human nature to be tribal. In the same way that rival nations gather to compete in the Olympic Games (sport as a non-violent means of aggression catharsis), the more polarized members of creative team, advisory board, and organizational partners could compete to create the most emotionally-convincing, evidence-backed narratives within the framework of the overarching story, especially those disinclined to participate in a joint Israeli-Palestinian creative venture in favor of cultural boycott.

The Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel defines normalization in the Palestinian as “the participation in any project, initiative or activity, in Palestine or internationally, that aims (implicitly or explicitly) to bring together Palestinians (and/or Arabs) and Israelis (people or institutions) without placing as its goal resistance to and exposure of the Israeli occupation and all forms of discrimination and oppression against the Palestinian people.” This element of competition offers a way to navigate BDS, to bring those

Commented [140]: Find source for social change from within the system rather than outside

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artists, producers, and organizations to the table to defend their narrative on an even playing field. This competitive-collaborative production mechanism could be set up much like turn-based game with teams arranged based on ideology within the overarching democratic vote-based system.

However, Olive Branch Pictures’ productions wouldn’t normalize occupation because they are designed representationally, created and funded by and for Israelis and Palestinians, vetted by a distinguished, ideologically advisory board, and aims to present the realities of the Conflict, which includes occupation and resistance as well as mobilize its audience to make mutual steps toward coexistence on the personal, community, commercial, and policy levels such as improving living standards, freedom of movement, technology, water access, and security.

By not participating, they forfeit the opportunity to fight for their perspective (with the pen and not the sword) on an even playing field, for the audience in their best interest to convince the veracity of their narrative, allowing that spot to either go unfilled or to someone who may not quite share their perspective or talent.

The same would apply to Israelis and Jews, by not participating, they would be revealing their unwillingness to make compromises for peace.


Commented [141]: Could add: to build bridges to improve final status negotiations.
Commented [142]: Maybe add: There is a perception among BDS activists that building support for international pressure, isolation, and vilification of Israel will lead to their goals of statehood or independence rather than with Israel in direct negotiations.
Commented [143]: For more on cultural boycott see: https://howlround.com/it-long-past-time-american-theatres-boycott-israel and try to craft creative solutions for how to appease such an audience without sacrificing the right of the Jewish people to self-determination in their homeland.

Commented [AH144]: Potentially add the element of Messiah in Judaism and Islam, the idea that God governs the world so such compromise couldn’t possibly prevent the inevitable coming of Messiah – only delay or accelerate it – and therefore this has never been done before in addition to many reasons previously or later stated, is worth doing. Additionally the concept of Murjiah, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Murjiah

Could be an Islamic way to justify peace

17:40 Islam, Christ, and Liberty | Mustafa Akyol | The JBP Podcast S4: E56
By presenting both narratives at the same time, the two parties engage in mutually advantageous dialectic comprise in that they allow their narrative to reach the ears of audiences unfamiliar with or in opposition to it, moderated by the presence of the narrative that they already agree with. Like how it is helpful often when giving feedback to an employee to share the negatives with the positives.

Palestinian authorities and BDS activists have traditionally opposed direct negotiations and interactions with Israel out of concern that any legitimization of Israel’s existence nullifies the validity of their own narratives and that building 3rd party support as well as isolation, vilification, and boycott of Israel will lead to their goals of statehood or independence. However, according to Secretary General of the United Nations Ban Ki Moon, “Peace can only come through direct negotiations between the two parties. (…) No solution can be imposed [only] from the outside; it must be based on direct negotiations on the final status issues”.

In addition to fostering peace, such a production could be used to maintain existing or newly established levels of peace.

Production

Commented [145]: Maybe add something like: “due to the high saturation of accessible media content, it is vital for Olive Branch Pictures productions to stand about the rest both for quality ad representational balance and engage in dept marketing both bottom-up grassroots and top-down advertisement.”

Commented [146]: Maybe add something like: “such productions present not only significant value in peacebuilding to stimulate existing peace processes but also in post-conflict situations for peace maintenance.”

Commented [AH147]: Maybe elaborate

There are several ways that the story could be produced. All methods involve a design thinking approach by a representational creative team with statistically sampled stakeholder input and oversight from an ideologically balanced, representational advisory board to ensure authenticity, representation, and balance, borrowing from the contemporary and historical memetics, semiotics, aesthetics, literature, and cultures of the conflict zone and its peoples as well as learning from the successes and failures of relevant productions.

One potential method is having a single writer, with considerable understanding of relevant societies, create the story, striving to portray actors with objectivity and balance, with a Jewish (Israeli) illustrator and (Palestinian) Arab illustrator pair. Another option is for Israeli-Palestinian pairs to create the script and the illustrations. It is also possible that the two representatives are each both the writer and the illustrator. A fourth alternative involves a Jewish or Israeli script writer matched with a (Palestinian) Arab illustrator or vice-versa. A fifth option has multiple writers and/or illustrators developing the script and/or illustrations together. Involving multiple writers and illustrators adds more perspective but creates more friction which could make the production longer and more expensive. An additional benefit is the more artists means more follower communities that could be absorbed. Artists could develop a common style or potentially allowing for a quilt of different styles. In all cases, the writer(s) and illustrator(s) could be selected for either “objectivity”, and/or balanced ideological (and ideally gender) representation (which arguably would mean a relative majority perspective). A sixth method could involve, as in the case of Liquid Comics’ and Open Hand
Initiative's The Silver Scorpion, representatives of the target demographics (in the case Israeli and Palestinian Youth) could be gathered and encouraged to imagine story ideas together which would be developed into a full production by the creative team. A seventh option could be an open call disseminated to target communities through local channels to collect story ideas. Lastly, an eighth option has Olive Branch Pictures obtain the rights to and/or collaborate with the owners of existing intellectual property relevant to the conflict, and adapt them into comics and animation, improving their representation and ideological balance, and package curated content under one brand.

It is also possible to develop multiple stories through a variety of these methods and produce the ones which demonstrate the highest potential for social, economic, and artistic success. Generally, in the entertainment industry, studios receive dozens, even hundreds of scripts, choose a few dozen to develop and a handful of those actually get produced, knowing that roughly a half of them will fail, another third or so will break even, and a select few become massive successes, making up for the losses.

Expanding upon the concept of the advisory board, this judicial panel would be comprised of 9 or more individuals. An odd number to allow for a tie breaker and the number 9 because it potentially allows for enough diversity of experience to allow for adequate representation and expertise while being small enough to allow for quick enough decision making to actualize the production though possibly more diversity and expertise will be needed to accommodate audience/market demand. These advisors would include:

Commented [148]: As a studio with licenses for various pre-existing IP as well as original IP coalescing on representational, ideologically balanced counter-propaganda for peace, Olive Branch Pictures could charge a subscription fee (either b2c or b2b i.e. Netflix) and thus create a steady stream of income as long as it continues to produce and repackage/recycle new content. This can be attractive for the owners of the existing content because through marketing and rebranding it would give new life to their sales through which they would of course receive royalties. "Sustainability was cited by Mehraj, Anwar and Shahin as a challenge to their comic art. The three artists say they are stretched thin, having to multitask as producers, distributors and promoters of their comic books while working full-time jobs. "We need to make this industry sustainable," Anwar explained. "We can't continue to rely on grants, we need to find someone to handle the business aspect, and we need to make this a stable industry." Mehraj, agreed - telling the panel that the number of copies printed of her comic had more than halved since it first went to press. "The [comic] market in Lebanon is very small," Lena said. "The first issue we printed, we made 2,500 copies, now we're down to 1000, not more. But if some entrepreneur could take over the distribution, we could reach the Middle East. We are all artists; we can't be everything. Right now it's an NGO, we don't make money out of it; we need someone who can make it into a business, and I think that's the case for all Arab artists around the world." For Shahin, the solution to a contracting industry was to take on all the different publishing roles - but this has come with its own issues. "I decided to publish independently, so I also do marketing, PR, and distribution, and I don't think I do it very well, so the lack of a business aspect to this industry affects me as well," Shahin said. "I think comic art is an industry worth investing in, but [there is] no guarantee of a return on profits any time soon. If someone were to invest, they'd have to be a bit charitable and patient at first."
https://www.middleeasteye.net/features/arab-comic-artists-discuss-adversity-and-censorship

Commented [149]: Maybe add "in a subscription model"

Commented [150]: Consider changing the language to make it broader and therefore applicable to other conflicts and not just the Israeli-Palestinian conflict i.e. changing "Israeli and Palestinian illustrator" to "representative illustrators"

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● Religious leaders representing at least the majority views of the stakeholder doctrines i.e., the Abrahamic faiths if not other dharmas such as Buddhist, Hindu, etc. as well.

● Community leaders nominated by popular survey, expert opinion, and internal review.

● Political representatives i.e., elected officials, negotiators, diplomats, etc.

● Distinguished academics from various disciplines including psychology, religion, political science, anthropology, art history, etc.

● Artists, namely those experiences in illustration and animation as well as prominent stakeholder art/cultural leaders.

● Media experts including news media, entertainment media, and media technology.

These advisors would serve to arbitrate controversies within the production process such as character, plot, dialogue, etc. as well as recruitment and distribution. Votes will be decided by majority, plurality, consensus on a case-by-case basis or agreed upon permanently by consensus by the advisory board itself. In the case of no agreement, both or all options should be implemented if possible. It would be the job of the creative production team i.e., writers, artists, and directors to come up with creative solutions to present to the advisory board for approval. For example, if deciding who makes the first tangible act of aggression in the story, the Jew or the Arab, the advisory board may not reach a conclusive vote until the creative team presents a fictional, yet realistic scenario in which it is ambiguous who committed the first tangible act of aggression.

Commented [152]: When discussing religious authority approval, that as long as such productions avoid going against such religious perspective by following negative commandments, potentially dancing round issues subliminally, rather than positive commandments, and thus incorporate the collective, generational wisdom of these religions without being overly restrictive in prescribing behavior through storytelling.
Expanding upon the concept of stakeholder crowdsourced input, Olive Branch Pictures aims to conduct statistically representational surveys of stakeholders to provide feedback and suggestions on the stories we develop to meet the narrative needs of the intended audience as well as foster a connection between the story and the stakeholder audience knowing that they had a direct impact on the production. Olive Branch Pictures would apply standard counter-biasing methods to survey these stakeholders in concert with experts and established institutions. It may be necessary to offer payment to some of the surveyees for their time to achieve appropriate sample sizes in the same way that test subjects are paid to participate in scientific research experiments.

It may be necessary to have an executive with final say or veto power in order to actualize the production. If so, recognizing the virtual impossibility of an unbiased perspective, especially regarding controversial conflicts, this executive should be selected based on demonstrated lack of bias or commitment to the pursuit of objectivity as well as specialized, general expertise of the interdisciplinary fields relevant to the entire project.

The ultimate goals behind the structure of Olive Branch Pictures are to promote the highest quality production and greatest positive impact within budget constraints, producing stories capable of reaching diverse stakeholder communities (particularly the next generation), building mutual trust and understanding, and breaking the cycles of propaganda, xenophobia, hatred, and violence.

Commented [153]: Maybe add: When collecting survey data door-to-door (and virtually), we should follow Khalil Shikaki’s approach of bring both a man and woman who can enter the house to speak with the wife or daughters if the father isn’t home in traditional Palestinian society.

Commented [154]: Define target stakeholder audience (and target commercial market)
Target Audience

Olive Branch Pictures’ target audience for its Israeli-Palestinian production is divided into two overlapping sectors: the commercial audience and the social impact audience.

The target age is 11-14 specifically but more generally intended for “the whole family”. The commercial audience is based on that of similar products including graphic novels such as Persepolis, Maus, and Joe Sacco’s “Palestine”, animated feature films such as The Prince of Egypt, Disney’s Frozen, Ari Folman’s Waltz with Bashir, and Bilal, and edutainment apps and video games such as Jeel, FunBrain, and National Geographic Challenge!.

The social impact audience is derived from the hierarchy of proximately to the conflict both social and physical, with the biggest perpetrators and victims of the conflict and as well as the most extreme leaning groups at the top, firstly, local Israelis and Palestinians, followed by Jews and Palestinians in the diaspora, then the neighboring populations, then the Middle East and North Africa, then the larger Muslim world, then the Christian world, and then international.

Prototype

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378 https://nerdbear.com/educational-games/
379 https://jeelapp.com/EN/

Commented [155]: Maybe list Total Addressable Market, Total Serviceable Market, and Serviceable Attainable Market here
Olive Branch Pictures’ first production will tackle the Palestine-Israel issue. OBP’s prototype “Shira and Amal”, tells the story of two young women, one Israeli, one Palestinian, who use art and music to cope with trauma and bring peace to Jerusalem.

“Shira and Amal” is memetically, semiotically, and linguistically engineered to employ the freedom of fiction, language, imagery to navigate the social, political, and religious factors of the conflict without sacrificing entertainment value.

The story of Shira and Amal is flexible, subject to the input of ideologically diverse, representational experts and members of the target social impact audience, as well as ongoing changes in the region. The story could very well change entirely depending on the creative process, feedback, discourse, and production constraints. Shira and Amal strives to balance the Israeli and Palestinian narratives with dual protagonists through fiction based on reality, history, experience and universal story principles, avoiding overt didacticism – allowing the audience to interpret meaning for themselves. The characters, “Shira” and “Amal”, are designed to be role-models, teaching the next generation how to cope with trauma, learn from mistakes, and the value of education, discipline, and creativity. They are strong, independent women who offer the potential to inspire women across the Middle

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East. Their journey across both secular and religious worlds enables access to both religious and secular audiences. The cast of characters are designed as cultural and/or ideological representatives and expose the audience to diverse perspectives.

**Media Bias and Propaganda**

In this region multiple media outlets and educational platforms consistently perpetuate biased views on controversial issues. There is generally a lack of open-mindedness and lots of accusation with little confession or counterargument. By distributing equally between stakeholders, Olive BranchPictures’ productions will counteract propaganda and outperform biased media outlets with a meaningful, balanced, entertaining narrative. There are those who would call the work of Olive Branch Pictures propaganda itself, especially when they come across ideas in its productions that present alternative perspectives to their narrative, but if indeed Olive Branch Pictures can achieve ideologically balanced representation, then it would stand to counteract propaganda. In an increasingly “post-truth” world in which facts are subjective and discourse is dominated by feelings, an ideologically balanced, representational board of relevant experts is necessary to presenting an accurate, authentic depiction of reality and gaining the trust of any audience.

**Game Theory**

Commented [158]: Consider swapping some “by…will” statements with “if…then” statements regarding supporting theories of change as promoted by

Commented [159]: Maybe discuss the idea of a “post-truth” era
Game Theory simulates statistical models in a wide variety of fields from economics and international relations to biology and psychology.\textsuperscript{380} The “Hawk-Dove” game can be applied to model the impact potential of Olive Branch Pictures for the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict.\textsuperscript{381} Players “A” and “B” choose to fight (Hawk) with the chance to gain resource “r” (in this case land) or concede (Dove). The “Nash Equilibrium” occurs when both parties’ available options leave them better off no matter what their opponent decides.\textsuperscript{382} However, humans are inherently emotional, amoral and egoistic.\textsuperscript{383} Influences such as religion can affect rational decision-making. To err is human, to forgive divine.\textsuperscript{384} International involvement helps prevent zero-sum outcomes by incentivizing all outcomes to activate a negotiation mechanism, “n”.

Negotiations are based on the players’ relative power (physical, economic, demographic, legal, diplomatic, media, cultural, moral, etc.), “n_A”:“n_B”, plus foreign influence and the players’ ability to forgive, agree to disagree, and find mutual gains, and creative problem-solve, regardless of the “solution”, whether two-state, one-state “Palestine”, one-state “Israel”, confederation, improved status-quo, no-state, multi-lateral resettlement (as opposed to forced exile or genocide), etc.. Variable Olive Branch Pictures “Ω”, which represents all top-down and bottom-up diplomacy efforts, increases the probability of successful negotiations by improving mutual understanding, communications, and goodwill, increasing the value of both n_A and n_B and

\textsuperscript{381} Eryk Dobrushkin. “A Game Theoretic Approach to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict” Harvard College (2019).
\textsuperscript{384} Alexander Pope. “An Essay on Criticism” (1711).
moderating the range between \( n_B \) and \( n_A \). If one player chooses “Hawk” and the other chooses “Dove”, the Hawk claims “\( r \)”. If players both choose Hawk, they incur a cost relative to their power, “\( c_A - c_B \)”, until the Nash equilibrium is reached, aliens invade, or the Messiah comes. If both players choose Dove neither player incurs cost “\( c \)”. Players receive \( \pm n \) plus mutual cultural diplomacy gains “\( r \)”.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Player A</th>
<th>Player B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hawk</strong></td>
<td><strong>Dove</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( n_A + r - n_B + c_A )</td>
<td>( n_B + r - n_A + c_B )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( n_A + r - n_B + c_A )</td>
<td>( n_B + r - n_A + c_B )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Trust**

According to a 2019 study from the nonprofit, nonpartisan RAND Corporation assessing the support for alternative solutions to the Israel-Palestine conflict by average Israelis and Palestinians, “mistrust, broadly defined, is likely the greatest impediment to peace.”

A significant reason for the failure of the Oslo Accords and other peace negotiation attempts was a lack of trust. The terms of agreement were not implemented proportionately and simultaneously by both sides. The arrangement was Palestinian de-escalation of terrorism in...

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Commented [160]: Is \( + \) or \( x \), etc. if it increases the probability of successful negotiations thus increasing the value of both \( n_B \) and \( n_A \) and moderates the range?

Commented [AH161]: Take out?

Commented [162]: Maybe add explanation of infinite vs. finite game and how it applies to this model. The goal is to influence the players away from a zero-sum, finite game, in which...

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exchange for Israeli de-escalation of settlement construction. Increasing trust and communication improves the likelihood of fair negotiations. Full representation and ideological balance would allow the production to gain the trust of and thereby engage diverse stakeholder audiences.

Transparency

Olive Branch Pictures is committed to full transparency. We will disclose all financial records and document the entire production process to produce into a “the making of” documentary. In addition to increasing transparency, this documentation including periodical video and blog updates, as well as access to unedited footage, will support promotion and impact.

Power

It is important to address power dynamics within the conflict Olive Branch Pictures undertakes. While history has been traditionally written by the victors, we know on a moral level that “might does not make right”. At the same time, meek does not make right either. It can be easy to fall into the perspective of oppressor and oppressed; but it isn’t always so black and white. The balance of power should be accurately depicted through the storytelling as well as how that situation came to be. The production should avoid imposing moral judgements upon the situation when possible, allowing the audience to grapple with the moral challenges presented themselves.

Dignity

Dignity is critical to solving conflicts. Look at the history of World Wars I and II. Hitler used the humiliation of the German people in WWI after the Treaty of Versailles to justify their need to dominate, leading to WWII and the scapegoating of the Jewish people. Preserving the dignity of both parties, particularly the weaker one; prevents smoldering humiliation from igniting into violence. Additionally, it is very difficult to change someone’s mind without listening to and respecting their perspective, even if you consider it extreme. By emphasizing dignity, Olive Branch Pictures will help sow the seeds of forgiveness and pluck the weeds of resentment.

Tradition Formation

*OBP Productions* could be watched annually as a family or community to form a tradition. This annual tradition could coincide with a holiday for peace and reconciliation. It is in this same way that Jews, Muslims, Christians, and countless other faiths preserve their cultural and religious identity by annually re-reading their stories. Olive Branch Pictures could work with NGO and Non-Profit partners as well as local theaters and communities to promote annual screenings.

While it is necessary to forgive to resolve conflict that does not mean it is necessary to forget.

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Mythmaking

The dominant view of archeologists and historians postulate that the Torah and other holy texts contain historical inaccuracies and were adapted over generations rather than transmitted at once and borrow from various regional myths. Many Muslim and Jewish scholars agree that every passage of their sacred texts should be interpreted literally until proven otherwise and should then be understood as metaphor.

Many Islamic and Jewish scholars agree that every bit of their sacred texts should be interpreted literally until proven otherwise and should then be understood as metaphor.

If this is indeed true then Olive Branch Pictures might hope to emulate the historic approach of collective mythmaking, bringing together conflicting communities and building from past mythological, cultural traditions as well as scientific, data-intensive approaches, to construct a myth capable of uniting these communities. Without mutual exclusion, Olive Branch Pictures hopes to tap into both the collective unconscious and the contemporary zeitgeist to produce true works of art, drawing inspiration from the sacred, the divine.

Distribution

Commented [168]: Many Islamic and Jewish scholars agree that every bit of their sacred texts should be interpreted literally until proven otherwise and should then be understood as metaphor. https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/716561/rabbi-jeremy-wieder/non-literal-interpretation-of-scripture-in-jewish-tradition/?fbclid=IwAR1Cs-E2WF8-iZ0CusdDVrT_yb2Qytwz6-mwDFKwMplg2nZJunXy8wrc_s

Commented [169]: Investigate where Maimonedes and Thomas Aquinas make this argument that reason and faith should not contradict each other, and it it another prominent Muslim scholar that makes this case? Ibn Sina?

Commented [170]: Expanding upon the long-term vision, take the plight of the Uyghurs in China as a hypothetical case study for how Olive Branch Pictures' model could productively mediate conflict and suffering. Assuming that the Chinese government is too powerful, their information infrastructure too tightly regulated and international spheres of influence too strong, to allow for unilateral international intervention economical, legal, military, or otherwise, in order to protect their international reputation, China might agree to co-sponsor an animated feature film about the Uyghur people with a production team made up of members selected by China, the Uygur community (abroad to prevent Chinese bias), and international private and public enterprise, to improve Chinese Public Relations while also making tangible improvements in the lives of the Uyghurs.

Commented [171]: Could add: the methodology behind Olive Branch Pictures can also be applied as a Post-Conflict solidifier or momentum-builder, helping to bury the hatchet socially and culturally, to be released right after a significant policy breakthrough or treaty

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While working with major and local studios and distributors, Olive Branch Pictures emphasizes grassroots distribution through ideologically diverse Non-Profit partners, word of mouth, and tours across schools, libraries, community centers, conferences, festivals to reach stakeholders. Olive Branch Pictures aims to distribute OBP productions proportionately and simultaneously across conflicting communities.

Edutainment391, 392

Among the most effective approaches to intractable conflict mediation is the education of the next generation, and one of the best ways to reach the next generation is visual storytelling, specifically comics and epic, musical animation. The education of the next generation is crucial to the maintenance or change of the socio-cultural status quo.393, 394, 395, 396 Education is also key to mitigating the cycle of hatred, violence, and xenophobia in the long run, because today’s youth are tomorrow’s citizens.

394 Nurit Basman-Mor. “Saving Peace Education: The Case of Israel”. Canadian Center of Science and Education (20 November 2020): https://doi.org/10.5539/nes.v11n1p18

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20th century sociologist Emile Durkheim rejected the idea that education could be the force to transform society and resolve social ills. Instead, Durkheim concluded that education “can be reformed only if society itself is reformed.” He argued that education is only the reflection of society and does not create it. However, this perspective doesn’t fully account for the constant variable of different pedagogies competing in the private and public education systems, especially in societies governed by majority rule, as well third-party influence. Durkheim is correct however in asserting that education cannot DIRECTLY impact society, such as policy or budget, but rather INDIRECTLY, such as media and track II diplomacy. This indirect impact is an advantage to Olive Branch Pictures model in fostering the willing of the conflicting parties to compromise, understanding that such compromise can only have indirect consequences.

Israeli and Palestinian education is rife with controversy. Both Israeli and

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Commented [175]: Maybe add: in regard to potential negative externalities which we would of course take every precaution to mitigate, focusing on common goals.
Palestinian public social studies curriculums erase, ignore, or antagonize the (national) identity of the other.\textsuperscript{398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408}

Legal scholars Ellen and Daniel Yamshon assert the efficacy of cartoons for peacebuilding and reconciliation: “The use of comics, graphics, and images can constitute powerful tools to sensitize, educate, and motivate people to participate in and prepare for dispute resolution.”\textsuperscript{409} As Palestinian-American scholar Edward Said writes, “comic books seem to exist in all languages and cultures, from East to West. In subject matter they go the whole range from inspired and fantastic to sentimental and silly; all of them, however, are easy to

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\textsuperscript{403} Or Kashti. “In Israeli Textbooks, the Palestinians Are All but Invisible”. \textit{Haaretz} (2020).

\textsuperscript{404} Michael Rubin. “Time for talking on hateful Palestinian textbooks is over”. \textit{The Times of Israel} (2021): https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/time-for-talking-on-hateful-palestinian-textbooks-is-over/


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read, to pass around, store, and throw away’. The universal language of cartoons can reach across literacy levels. Cartoons can support cognitive, behavioral, and moral development as well language acquisition. Kids love cartoons! Cartoons are particularly appealing to children due to their generally soft, imaginative, zany, dynamic nature. Animation has evolved as a respected adult art form and retain nostalgic appeal as well. Also, animation often appear less threatening than live-action because we more quickly comprehend that what we are seeing isn’t real. Furthermore, animation offers more creative freedom to express ideas than live actions. The influence of cartoons can also be negative, whether intentional or not, e.g., promoting violent or explicit content or behavior to children. Olive Branch Pictures plans to work with local and regional schools and education organizations to incorporate OBP productions into curriculums. Additionally, to facilitate dialogue, build our grassroots community, and give our audience the opportunity to process the OBP productions within their own communities, Olive Branch Pictures will organize both inter-and-intra-community discussion groups and Q&As, virtually and in-person. Especially in a world increasingly defined by fleeting attention spans, there is a clear need for ideologically balanced edutainment content for Israeli and Palestinian youth.

Commented [176]: Maybe add: Ideologically, the images used in cartoons are “means through which ideologies are produced and onto which ideologies are projected” (Sturken and Cartwright 2001: 21). As such, cartoons play an important role in manifesting political views and stances and reinforcing ideologies and power relationships (Lewis 2008; Kuipers 2008). From: Kawakib Al-Momani, Muhammad A. Badarneh and Fathi Migdadi A semiotic analysis of political cartoons in Jordan in light of the Arab Spring De Gruyter | Published online: November 18, 2016 https://doi.org/10.1515/humor-2016-0033

Commented [177]: Maybe add the use/utility of cartoons in “edutainment”


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Navigating Controversy and Reaching Social Impact Audiences

In order to reach certain stakeholder audiences, the production may need to cooperate with governments and religious authorities that control the media channels. If necessary, through diplomatic and clerical negotiation, Olive Branch Pictures can create slightly altered versions of it content, in regard to word choice and imagery, for different stakeholder audiences. Such alterations include augmenting the modesty of the characters’ costumes or language used to refer to political or religious ideas. 414

If however, despite honest intentions, civil negotiations, and creative problem-solving, such compromises would be so great as to violate the mission and values of Olive Branch Pictures, the production could subvert authorities, understanding that banned media often generates publicity which attracts viewership in a phenomenon known as the "Streisand effect", through grassroots networks and backdoor channels. 415 Additionally, OBP productions could feature multiple, interactive storylines, granting the audience the agency to “choose your own adventure” while also demonstrating the variability of narrative.

The identities of creators, publishers, and all other collaborators could be kept anonymous to protect them from malicious authoritarian regimes. In addition to potential collaboration with authorities, alternative versions, and subversion, the fourth way around


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censorship and reaching social impact audiences is to make content so mainstream, so viral, of such high quality, and kosher-halal enough, that it is irresistible.

**Funding**

Olive Branch Pictures will secure funding from ideologically diverse sources, from both investors, including individuals, studios, and publishers, and donors, including individuals, NGOs, IGOS, and foundations. Having ideologically diverse funding sources will mitigate bias and generate more consumer trust as well as reach a larger, more diverse audience. Sharing equity in the company between investors, founders, and the team with diverse, even contradictory perspectives, around common goals and values will further promote an equitable society.

**Hybrid-Profit Model**

Olive Branch Pictures operates a hybrid-profit model, committed to donating 10-20% of revenue to a coalition of ideologically diverse non-profit organizations facilitating regional peacebuilding and sustainable development. To involve our audience in the peacebuilding process, customers will decide which of our diverse non-profit partners they want to receive the donation. Additionally, stakeholder language versions of OBP productions will be distributed for free, for a subsidized price accounting for the relative GDPs of the language or
The Role of Music

Music organizes, catalyzes, and unifies collective identities.\textsuperscript{416} Music can solidify in-groupness, foster division, or inter-cultural reconciliation.\textsuperscript{417} The music for OBP production addressing the Israeli-Arab Conflict will be developed by representational musicians, ethnomusicologists, and linguists featuring a score of both classic and modern songs capturing both cultures, past and present and appeal to a multi-generational audience. Furthermore, by featuring liturgical songs from the represented faiths, the production will be able to reach religious audiences.

The Role of Comedy

In his book, \textit{Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious}, psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud identified three primary functions of jokes for society: “first, they provide a nonthreatening way to raise culturally taboo subjects; second, they serve as an adaptive strategy to adverse conditions; and third, they provide a benign outlet for repressed aggression and hostility.”\textsuperscript{418}

Additionally, just as comedy can shape group identity, it can also be a tool to and build bridges between conflicting groups. Comedy can foster positive change by disarmingly ridiculing flaws in society through satire, parody, self-deprecation, wit, etc., creating content that is highly sharable thus amplifying impact. However, comedy can be very hit or miss, and didacticism is often a joke killer.

Comedy contains both universal and culturally specific elements. By collaborating with comedic cultural representatives, veteran and rising comedy stars of the region who know the humor of the people, Olive Branch Pictures will engage its target social demographic audiences.

“Lost in translation” humor is universal – the funny mistakes we all make when learning a new language, mixing up words to say ridiculous things, accidently insulting people we wish to thank, and words that mean something in one language that mean something completely different in another.

Language

Miscommunication is a common cause of conflict. If peaceful coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians is to be possible, it is important that they be able to understand each other.

Commented [AH183]: Language is a core part of cultural identity. Our language influences the way we think, act, and perceive the world. Language is constantly changing just as the world is constantly changing. New words are created and adopted. Old words are lost. Spoken language is more fluid than the language of literature, which often forms and preserves the foundation of culture in civilizations, such as the Quran of Islamic civilization, in addition to oral traditions such as music. Mixed languages generally form as result of contact between two or more linguistic groups, dictated by social interaction and hegemonic forces (cultural, economic, military, demographic, etc.). The history of Semitic language morphology offers insights into how language is shaped by hegemony, contact, and survival, and reveals the adaptability of language and culture. The Yiddish language, adapted by Ashkenazi Jews in the European Diaspora, combined German and Hebrew. The Sephardi Diaspora Jews in Spain and Northern Africa spoke Ladino, a fusion of Spanish, Hebrew and a mix of Iberian and other Middle Eastern languages. The Mizrachi Diaspora Jews developed Judeo-Arabic dialects across Iraq, Morocco, Libya, Tunisia, and Yemen. Aramaic, commonly known as the language of Jesus of Nazareth, is a Semitic language built from several Canaanite languages that spread broadly across the Middle East. The Aramaic alphabet was widely adopted for other languages including Hebrew and Arabic.

The revival of the Hebrew language took place between Europe and Palestine around the end of the 19th century, evolving from the language of Judaism to a spoken and written language later used for daily life in Israel. Modern Hebrew is the only known example of a language with no native speakers becoming the first language of millions of people. Hebrew and Arabic were the official languages of the state of Israel when it was founded in 1948 until in July 2018, the Jewish Nation-State Law made Hebrew the sole official language of the state of Israel, giving Arabic a "special status". Approximately 28.6% of Israelis speak Arabic comprised of approximately 20% Arab-Israelis whose mother-tongue is Arabic, and roughly 8.6% Israeli-Jews with varying unfamiliarities of Arabic including Modern Standard Arabic, Judeo-Arabic, and the Palestinian Dialect. Cross-cultural language acquisition has been on the rise since 2015. There has always been extensive contact between Hebrew and Arabic. During the height of Islamic civilization in the Middle Ages, Jewish scholars translated many Arabic writings into Hebrew but there were many new science and philosophy concepts that couldn’t be expressed using existing Hebrew vocabulary so new Hebrew words were created using the roots and patterns of Arabic. This...
Hebrew and Arabic, linguistic cousins, share more than 30% in common.\(^{422}\) The language used in OBP productions addressing the Palestine-Israel issue would employ Hebrew-Arabic cognates as well as common words and phrases, as much as realistically and artistically possible to stimulate the learning of the "other's" language for the stakeholder audience. Additionally, Hebrew and Arabic dubbing with multiple subtitles offers an engaging form of language learning. Bilingual schools and cross-cultural language programs would be included in the coalition of diverse non-profits supported by Olive Branch Pictures' profit funnel.

**Social Impact**

Olive Branch Pictures' social impact goals are:

1. Mediate long-term hatred and violence, improve mutual understanding, build trust.
2. Counteract biased media and propaganda.
3. Promote shared morals and values.
4. Provide high quality, entertaining educational content.
5. UN Sustainable Development Goal #16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions.
6. Regional Economic Development: Providing jobs and training.

**Social Impact Metrics**


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Recognizing the difficulty in measuring the social impact of media and people-to-people peacebuilding, Olive Branch Pictures is committed to applying best practices and tools in survey data collection and impact evaluation in coordination with local surveyors and media influence measurement organizations such as the Palestinian Center for Policy & Survey Research, Harmony Labs, and Arab Barometer, evaluating key social impact indicators including:

- # Stakeholder readers/viewers
- Testimonials/Anecdotal Evidence
- Longitudinal Focus Group Studies
- Public Opinion + Critical Reviews
- Survey data of changes in audience attitude & behavior
- Changes in policy & resource allocation
- # Jobs + Training for underprivileged stakeholders
- Artistic Quality recognition awards i.e. Annie Awards, Annecy, etc.
- Amount of funds raised for ideologically diverse non-profit partners

Based on frameworks including

- Ian Thomas's "Building an Impact Evaluation Toolbox based on an Arts and Soft Power Ecosystem"
• The Participant Index from Participant Media, a media-impact research system from Participant Media that mines social media conversations and audience opinion data to determine audience reactions to film, TV, and video content.

Scale

The comics medium enables low-cost minimum viable products, which can then be scaled to animation and educational games, adapting to stakeholder audience feedback and changing socio-political landscapes, partnering with international, regional, and local production and distribution companies, to reach massive audiences, including stakeholders.

Olive Branch Pictures envisions applying this methodology to counteract rising general trends in mis-and-disinformation as well as other social conflicts all over the world such as India-Pakistan, Uyghurs in China, political polarization, and ethnic prejudice.

Conclusion

Narratives are the stories that define our identities, individually and collectively. Stories are sequences of events that communicate the human experience. Stories capture social realism and idealism. Humans need ideals to strive for. Myths are stories of civilizations. We create heroes that reflect our ideals and tell stories to shape the values of our people. The history of cartoons and graphic literature, specifically in the Middle East, demonstrates cartoons as effective vehicles of communication and their potential for conflict mediation. While it is

Commented [188]: Address how focusing on intractable conflicts can work as a model. Increase awareness and mobilize productive support of an international audience. Recognizing that there are those industries such as media and warfare technology profit from conflict and can intentionally or unintentionally perpetuate it.

Counter-argument: what about the people who just want to escape? Who don’t want to be mobilized into a grassroots advocacy network?

Answer: Hopefully Olive Branch Pictures productions will be so entertaining and the idea that part of their ticket money is going to help people is enough to make them feel good and just enjoy the story and for those who are willing to do more, we can pull them in

Commented [AH189]: Maybe condense into one sentence or take out.
practically impossible to separate the perspective of the storyteller from the story, it is possible
to synthesize diverse perspectives from multiple storytellers. This will not be easy. It will require
courage, creativity, open-mindedness, empathy, a diverse and talented team, perseverance,
and collective, grassroots effort. But I believe it can and should be done.

Andy Hirsh is the Founder of Olive Branch Pictures, Inc. He
was the 2020 Luff Peace Fellow at the Watson Institute and
a 2021 50:50 Startups Fellow. Andy completed his BA in
Political Science at Wesleyan University. He is pursuing a
dual Social Impact MBA and MA in Conflict Resolution and
Coexistence at Brandeis University and studying Jewish Law,
Ethics, and Philosophy at the Heiden Institute: Machon Shlomo in Jerusalem. “Shira and Amal”
and Olive Branch Pictures were first inspired in July 2017 in culmination of Andy’s volunteer
experiences in the Middle East, Mexico, and India, his Jewish roots and curiosity for all
dharmas, falling in love with a peacenik in Tel Aviv, a passion for media, storytelling, diplomacy,
language, and entrepreneurship, and a need to reclaim his
creativity. Andy has always loved cartoons since he was a kid.
He fondly remembers reading original superhero comics with
his Dad and waking up early for Saturday morning cartoons.

`: andy.hirsh@watson.is  @: olivebranchpictures.org

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under Section 107 of the Copyright Act 1976 "fair use" policy for purposes such as news
reporting, teaching, scholarship, and research. 
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Add The history of animation begins with the flickering light from fire on cave drawings. Then Plato’s allegory of the Cave”.

Imprisonment in the cave[edit]

Plato begins by having

Socrates ask Glaucon to imagine a cave where people have been imprisoned from childhood, but not from birth. These prisoners are chained so that their legs and necks are fixed, forcing them to gaze at the wall in front of them and not to look around at the cave, each other, or themselves (514a–b).[2] Behind the prisoners is a fire, and between the fire and the prisoners is a raised walkway with a low wall, behind which people walk carrying objects or puppets "of men and other living things" (514b).[2] The people walk behind the wall so their bodies do not cast shadows for the prisoners to see, but the objects they carry do ("just as puppet showmen have screens in front of them at which they work their puppets" (514a)[2]). The prisoners cannot see any of what is happening behind them, they are only able to see the shadows cast upon the cave wall in front of them. The sounds of the people talking echo off the walls, and the prisoners believe these sounds come from the shadows (514c).[2]

Socrates suggests that the shadows are reality for the prisoners because they have never seen anything else; they do not realize that what they see are shadows of objects in front of a fire, much less that these objects are inspired by real things outside the cave which they do not see (514b–515a).[2]

The fire, or human-made light, and the puppets, used to make shadows, are done by the artists. Plato, however, indicates that the fire is also the political doctrine that is taught in a nation state. The artists use light and shadows to teach the dominant doctrines of a time and place. Also, few humans will ever escape the cave. This is not some easy task, and only a true philosopher, with decades of preparation, would be able to leave the cave, up the steep incline. Most humans will live at the bottom of the cave, and a small few will be the major artists that project the shadows with the use of human-made light.

Departure from the cave[edit]

Plato then supposes that one prisoner is freed. This prisoner would look around and see the fire. The light would hurt his eyes and make it difficult for him to see the objects casting the shadows. If he were told that what he is seeing is real instead of the other version of reality he sees on the wall, he would not believe it. In his pain, Plato continues, the freed prisoner would turn away and run back to what he is accustomed to (that is, the shadows of the carried objects). He writes "... it would hurt his eyes, and he would escape by turning away to the things which he was able to look at, and these he would believe to be clearer than what was being shown to him."[2]

Plato continues: "Suppose... that someone should drag him... by force, up the rough ascent, the steep way up, and never stop until he could drag him out into the light of the sun."[2] The prisoner would be angry and in pain, and this would only worsen when the radiant light of the sun overwhelms his eyes and blinds him.[2]

"Slowly, his eyes adjust to the light of the sun. First he can see only shadows. Gradually he can see the reflections of people and things in water and then later see the people and things themselves. Eventually, he is able to look at the stars and moon at night until finally he can look upon the sun itself (516a)."[2] Only after he can look straight at the sun "is he able to reason about it" and what it is (516b).[2] (See also Plato's analogy of the sun, which occurs near the end of The Republic, Book VI.[3][4])

Return to the cave[edit]

Plato continues, saying that the freed prisoner would think that the world outside the cave was superior to the world he experienced in the cave and attempt to share this with the prisoners
remaining in the cave attempting to bring them onto the journey he had just endured; "he would bless himself for the change, and pity [the other prisoners]" and would want to bring his fellow cave dwells.

Adel Tartir

Palestine

Theatrical artist, storyteller and owner of “Sandouq El-Ajab” (The Wonder Box), Adel Tartir, is one of the most important pioneers and founders of the contemporary theatrical movement in Palestine in his work in theatre for nearly half a century. He was one of the founders of the theatrical Group “Balaleen” (1970) and Sandouq El-Ajab Theatrical Group (1975). In the early nineties, Tartir used the heritage 'Peep Box' (Wonder Box) and the storyteller 'Abu al-Ajab' in his theatrical works. Tartir has participated in several local, Arab and international festivals, events and workshops. Furthermore, Abu Al-Ajab continues to wander with his stories to become an integrated theatrical form that is not limited to folk tales, but extends to addressing many different topics and issues.

http://museum.arabpuppettheatre.org/index.php/bands/band-info/?id=recu3f77xJAK1AWDg
Nidal Khatib started his journey in a prison cell. Back in 1982, Khatib was put in an Israeli jail for six months for distributing posters during Land Day. There he met his fellow detainees, who became part of the “theatre” they all created. They turned the cell into a stage and used the tools available to them as props. This was the starting point for Khatib that led him to become an exquisite puppeteer.
Khatib was fascinated mostly by the idea of “changing roles.” Through the stage, he found a medium for self-expression.

Upon his release from prison, Khatib decided to go further with theatre. He joined the Hakawati Theatre in Jerusalem and found himself especially attracted to comedy: “The theatre is a place where people can receive spiritual joy and, at the same time, it leaves them with a message,” Khatib explains. The first play he performed as a professional actor was Slaves Go West, directed by Radi Shehadeh.

Then the first Intifada erupted in 1988, and Khatib was back in jail for another six months, this time in Ansar-3, an Israeli prison compound located in southern Palestine. He, once again, used his time in jail for a new production. Ansar-3, named after the prison compound, deals with surviving the prison cell, the challenges he faced, the dry desert, and the hardship of being disconnected from family. The play was then directed by Fateh Azzam and performed in various places in Palestine, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States. Following the success of Ansar 3, Nidal pursued his theatre studies at Lancaster University in the United Kingdom and returned to Palestine in 1991 upon graduating. Khatib came back with a new spirit in mind and decided to dedicate his work to children’s theatre by establishing Tantoura puppet theatre. Khatib has an
entire family of puppets that extends from daughters of mothers to sons of army soldiers!

His decision to move from adult to children’s theatre, specifically puppetry, emerged for many reasons. First and foremost is because Khatib has a passion to send a message of hope, peace, and love to Palestinian children. “Life in Palestine is full of pain,” he explains, “but I want to be happy and defend the peace and love in the world, with myself and with the children.” In addition, he enjoys working with puppets: “Each has a character,” he says, “and a spiritual connection.”

Khatib met his beloved Maysoun in February 2000, when a partnership began. Maysoun became an integral part of the puppet theatre and added the female voice and spirit to the work. Khatib believes in the importance of having a woman in this medium that for too long has been dominated by the male voice. They now work together as a family along with their four children: Mousa (10 years old) is the technical assistant; Maysam (8 years old) and Majdal Shams (6 years old) are costume designers, and Makram (5 years old) is the youngest Palestinian actor! The children are always present during shows, either as actors or behind the scenes.
They have almost 200 shows every year at schools and in villages, camps, cities, and various Palestinian communities.

The couple was awarded the Palestine Award for Excellence and Creativity in 2010.

Currently, the family is working in Shadow Theatre and just finished the production of *The Inferno of the Shadow*, now on tour in Palestine. The play addresses the issue of violence against women and their right to inheritance.


"We have almost 15-20 original characters that have managed to sustain their weight over the years. Based on extensive research conducted directly with kids, we revamped Majid TV in February last year," Al Serkal explains. One of the Original shows titled *Jamool* (Camel) was launched during Ramadan this year. The series is Majid's first silent animated show. Separated from his mother at birth, Jamool, the camel, goes on adventures to discover who he is. In every episode, he meets a new animal and tries to imitate it, hoping to see whether he can finally discover his true species.
Unlike other Majid IPs that feature Emirati characters such as 'Amoona' or 'Fateen', jamool is a show with no cultural specs.

‘Jamool’

“Jamool’s theme is universal. Anyone can enjoy the show because it is funny and relatable. We don’t need to put Arabic elements in everything we make. That’s not how you make kids want to watch it,” says Al Serkal.

The platform’s Youtube channel has 65m total views and 463m impressions.


Page 104: [5] Commented [58] Andrew Hirsh 5/20/21 10:07:00 PM

Add:

Dear honored guests,
My name is Majda Shaheen, I am a Palestinian residing in a short strip of land called the Gaza Strip. As you all probably know, our current situation is exceedingly difficult in light of the last war we experienced. It is still unclear what the upcoming days will bring, but I hope with all my heart that we will succeed in obtaining true peace, so that my children and all the Palestinian people will be privileged to live a good and ordinary life.

It is a great honor to accept this wonderful award from the Cartoonists' Rights Network International. Unfortunately, I am not able to attend this ceremony or fly to the United States of America, a country that only in my sweetest dreams am I able to witness its wonders.

The importance of art in my life has nothing to compare, in its intensity. From the moment I first experienced the beauty of art my life was changed. It is not a simple matter for a woman like me to express my opinions with such clarity, particularly when these opinions don't coincide with those of the current rulers, The Hamas movement.

Cartoons are the instrument which I use to express myself as a person and to present my own
opinions and values as an independent person. On one hand, cartoons are a medium many
identify with and accept, and through which people are exposed to new philosophies and
schools of thought. On the other hand, many who have become entrenched with their own
beliefs come into conflict with cartoonists, disregarding all other opinions which might threaten
them. This has occurred to me on multiple occasions.
Despite all the obstacles and challenges put in my way, I still believe in the influence of art on
society and culture, even when that influence might be undetected. It is essential for me to
express myself as a woman and as a Palestinian living in Gaza, a place where opinions similar
to mine are rarely heard and are not given the opportunity to be broadly communicated. Our
political leaders willingly choose to ignore or silence voices that do not match their agenda.
Revolutions begin from the simple people, who raise their voices to speak for themselves and
represent the silent majority.
I want to thank whomever supported me and stood by me through the most difficult of times. A
special thanks to Dr. Russell and members of the CRNI Board of Directors who have given me
a place to express my opinions, helped me through most difficult moments, and have granted
me this wonderful award. Let us hope that art will overcome all hardships and guide us towards
a better and more just society.
Thank you very much, Majda Shaheen
***SHE COULD BE THE ONE, BUT HER LIFE WAS THREATENED FOR HER WORK, IS SHE
EVEN STILL ALIVE
cartooning-award/
*To get in touch maybe reach out to Robert Russel, Founder of Cartoonists Rights Network
International robertrussellstudio@gmail.com
http://www.robertrussell.net/contact-test

Maybe add:
Ahmed Naji | نادي، أحمد
Naji’s graphic novel Using Life is about protagonist filmmaker Bassam Bahgat, who after being
asked to create a documentary about urban planning and architecture in Cairo, discovers a
network of underground conspiracies run by his employers.

Two years after the novel’s 2014 release, a reader reported an extract of the text to the
government for "harm[ing] public morality"; Naji was sentenced to two years in prison. While
widespread international public support found Naji an early release, he was put on trial again in
2017 for similar charges (Johnston).
Naji’s imprisonment demonstrates how controversial media can be weaponised

against its author when authorities disagree with controversial content. His support and early
release, however, instead demonstrate the power of free speech, and how the public rally
against threats of unfair persecution.
https://arabcomixproject.weebly.com/censorship--persecution.html

Maybe add: Zehra Doğan (born April 14, 1989) is a Kurdish artist and journalist and author
from Diyarbakir, Turkey. In 2017, she was sentenced to 2 years, 9 months and 22 days in
prison for “terrorist propaganda” because of her news coverage, social media posts, and
sharing a painting of hers on social media.[2] Her painting depicts the destruction of
the Nusaybin, town in southeastern Turkey, after the clashes between state security forces and
Kurdish insurgents. After she finished her sentence, she was released from imprisonment
from Tarsus Prison on 24 February 2019.[3][4]
Nachum Gutman was born in Teleneşti, in modern Moldova. He was the fourth child of Rivka Simcha Alter Gutman, who was a Hebrew writer and educator who wrote under the pen name S. ben Zion. In 1903, the family moved to Odessa, and two years later, to Ottoman Palestine in Herzliya. In 1912, he studied at the Bezalel School in Jerusalem. In 1920–26, he studied art in Vienna, Berlin and Paris. Gutman helped pioneer a distinctively Israeli style in a variety of mediums, moving away from the European influences of his teachers. His sculptures and brightly colored mosaics can be seen in public places around Tel Aviv. Gutman's artistic style was eclectic, ranging from figurative to abstract. Gutman was also a well-known writer and illustrator of children's books. In 1935, Gutman published “In the land of Lubengolo King of Zulu” about his voyage to East Africa and the legendary King Lobengula of the Ndebele tribe.

In 1958 Gutman released a well-known Israeli children’s book, “Path of Orange Peels”, a story about a Jewish youth who becomes unwittingly involved in a dangerous and important mission during World War I as the British and Turks struggle for control of Palestine.
Add "animator, director, professor, and journalist Tsvika Oren, who has produced more than 30 films initiator, including Mermaid SOS
Country-Israel
Year-2004
Director-Avi Ofer, Tsvika Oren
Awards
Official selection I Casteli Animati 2004, Genzano di Roma, Italy.
Asif 2004, Tel-Aviv. First prize for independent film
and co-founder of the Israeli chapter of ASIFA (Association Internationale du Film d'Animation) was honored at the Asif 2010 ceremony held on Friday, August 20, as part of the Animix festival at the Tel Aviv Cinematheque.

Asif 2010 – Israeli Animation

By
Ayelet Dekel
August 22, 2010
https://www.midnighteast.com/mag/?p=6937
Sipur Ahava
year 1980
country israel
director Haim Callev
Screenplay Yaffa Callev
Producer Haim Callev
Cinematographer Kobe Yoel
composer Yaron Kafkafi
assembly Yaffa Callev
genre cartoon, short film
time 30 min.


Maybe add:
Swamp

year 1992
country israel
director Gil Alkabetz
genre cartoon, short film
time 11 min.
Battle of two horse armies. Whose side will the advantage be?

Awards
Canada, Ottawa International Animation Festival Special Jury Prize
Original idea October 1, 1992

Maybe add:
Lights the miracle of chanukah

year 1983
country USA Israel
genre cartoon short
time 24 min.
Premiere - USA 1983

Maybe add: דבזוב, BITZBUTZ

year 1984
country israel
directed by Gil Alcabetz
script by Gil Alcabetz

genre cartoon short
time 3 min.
A play of contrasts, a black monster and a white bird are trying to overcome each other.
Awards
1984 Short Film Competition, Israel, Animation Award; 1985 Short Film Festival, Melbourne, Australia, Animation Award. 1985 Veyrier Animated Film Festival, Geneva, Switzerland

Maybe add:
Tzav Kriya
year 1989
country israel
director Haim Callev
script by Yaffa Callev
producer Haim Callev
cameraman Kobe Yoel

assembly by Yaffa Callev
genre cartoon short
time30 min


In the twenty-first century, Israeli animation is bursting with renewed vigor with many cartoons and a sea of awards. Israel is turning from a consumer of animation to a producer of animation!
The waitress
year 2000
Country - Israel
Director - Talya Lavie

Curtain No. 2
Country-Israel
Year 2000
Director-Oran Adler

Gershon

year 2001
country israel
directed by Shunit Aharoni, Oren Yaniv
Screenplay by Shunit Aharoni, Oren Yaniv
Producer Shunit Aharoni, Oren Yaniv
Cinematographer Shunit Aharoni, Oren Yaniv
composer Saar Bar Shalev
artist Shunit Aharoni, Oren Yaniv
Editing: Shunit Aharoni, Oren Yaniv
genre cartoon, short film
time11 min.
Awards
Film Schools Festival, Mexico
Students Film Festival, Moscow
Fidec - International Festival for Cinema Schools, Huy, Belgium
Festival of Short Films and New Images, Rome
Menahshe and Nechama  
Country-Israel  
Year-2001  
Director-Micha Amitai  
Awards  
Melbourne Students Festival, Australia, 2002  
British Animation Awards, London, 2002  
Haifa Film Festival, 2001  
MK 22  

Country-Israel  
Year-2004  
Genre  
Animation  
Sitcom  
Created by  
Yaron Niski  
Doron Tzur  
Assaf Harel  
Ohad Elimelech  
Written by  
Yaron Niski  
Doron Tzur  
Assaf Harel  
Directed by  
Assaf haarel  
Voices of  
Danny Steg  
Haim Barbalat  
Albert Iluz  
Inbal Luri  
Adib Jahschan  
Ending theme  
"Tamid Ola HaMangina" by Pick Sisters  

"MK-22" is rightly compared with the American animated series South Park, as well as with the Israeli comedy "Givat Halfon Does Not Answer" - about border guards in Sinai. It was invented by the comic book authors Yaron Niski and Doron Tzur, based on their own military experience, a politically incorrect and funny series about everyday life in the army. The heroes of the series - soldiers Hanukkah and Shulman - serve at a military base guarding the "Doomsday secret weapon." Their service is mainly reduced to watching TV programs and clashes with a dumb warrant officer. Other heroes "MK-22" - a Bedouin terrorist and his herd of
shahid sheep, volunteer Michal in a wheelchair, an Ethiopian guard and a dozen celebrities (from Shimon Peres to Hasan Nasrallah). All are drawn in a square style (even the sun and the pacifist sign in the series are square), which, on the one hand, reflects the essence of the army, on the other hand, it gives originality to the images.

Awards
Israel Television Academy Prize, Best Comedy Series 2004


Maybe add:

Maybe add that there aren’t any Universities in Palestine that offered courses in comics and animation and with money tight in Palestine, architecture was a more practical path for thoses with artistic inclinations towards cartoons and animation such as Shomali
Khalil Abu Arafah is a Palestinian cartoonist, in favour of peaceful resistance. He was born in Jerusalem in 1957. He studied architecture in Kiev (Ukraine) and he currently pursues a double career of architect
and designer. His editorial cartoons are published in the daily newspaper Al Quds (based in East Jerusalem) since 1994. Khalil is also a writer and he published several illustrated books for children. He was also the first head writer of the Palestinian version of the TV show “Sesame Street”. In 1996, Khalil received the Ghassan Kanafani Award for excellence as a cartoonist. Both the Palestinian Hamas and the Israeli government are not pleased with his political activism which led him to spend a total of fourteen months in Israeli prisons between 1986 and 1992. 

Add Samir Harb
Born 1981 in Ramallah/Palestinian territories.
Samir Harb graduated from Department of Architectural Engineering at Birzeit University in Ramallah in 2006. He finished his studies in 2011 with a master’s degree in arts at Goldsmiths College in London/United Kingdom. He is an architect/cartoonist and has been working in the field of architecture and landscape planning in the West Bank since 2006. He attempts to mix between cartoons and his architecture research which explore and criticize the processes of territorial transformation in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt). Moreover he investigates the limits of architectural elements on the continuity of landscape in Palestine and translates the research into installations and drawings. He carried out several exhibitions in Rome/Italy, Ravenna/Italy, Oslo/Norway, and Amman/Jordan.
Harb’s project focuses on the idea to re-construct the meta-narrative in complex spatial orders. While architecture serves as the body of research in which the territorial, spatial networks, economical and political transformations are saturated. The graphic novel acts as a practice of reordering and shifting between things, events, dialogues, accounts, and archival material. His exhibitions represented a series of a strong graphic form, including maps, historical events, and main figures shaping the spatial order in the region. He took part in the Decolonizing Architecture (2010) with The Red Castle and The Lawless Line at 0047 in Oslo and We Have Woven the Motherlands with Nets of Iron (2011) in cooperation with Dr. Nicola Perogini at Giza Train Station in Amman.
He received the Granted Humanitarian Scholarship from Goldsmiths College in 2011 and the Melina Mercouri International Prize for protection and management of cultural landscape of the West Bank for the group project Battir cultural and natural landscape management plan 2011.
Comic: http://www.decolonizing.ps/site/battir-2/
The Red Castle and the Lawless Line: A legal-architectural fable of extraterritorial transformation

Maybe add:
Lamia Ziadé’s O Nuit O Mes Yeux.
This gorgeous graphic novel, by the tremendously gifted Ziadé (also the author of the Lebanese Civil War memoir Bye Bye Babylon, tr. Olivia Snaïje), was featured in Bulaq Episode 18. Ô Nuit Ô Mes Yeux is a stylish, charming illustrated text about the larger-than-life lives of Arab musicians. An excerpt titled “Fairouz in my Grandfather’s Shop,” translated into English by Edward Gauvin, appears in the July 2018 Words Without Borders.

Rawand Issa’s Not from Mars
This intense, poetic, and personal graphic novel from Lebanese artist Rawand Issa explores life, love, and what it means to be a woman. Although this is not in translation, if you buy the edition from Maamoul press, it comes with an “English translation sheet.” Maamoul also has a bilingual edition of Issa’s The Insubordinate in a “do-si-do fold.”
Soumeya Ouarezki and Mahmoud Benamar’s Fatma N’paralp

The opening of a book series written in Algerian Arabic, which centers on two mysterious women who live in an old house covered with umbrellas and become object of fear and fascination. The first is an old woman who can predict the future and prescribe remedies, while the second is smartly dressed, collects umbrellas, speaks French, and lives selling vegetables in the neighborhood, evading the boundaries set up around her. Translated to French by Lotfi Nia.

TO CONTRIBUTE & ANTICIPATE: Jewelry Box

Because of the political climate in Egypt, the Egyptian women’s graphic-novel collective Jewelry Box (ﺔﯾﺟﻣﻛﺷﻟا) ceased publishing their magazine. But now the Beirut-based Knowledge Workshop has partnered with Jewelry Box creators to put together a new issue, which promises to explore love from a feminist perspective.

https://arablit.org/2019/08/13/in-for-translation-7-graphic-novels-by-arab-women/

Maybe add some of these:
Baraitser, Marion and Anna Evans. Home Number One: A Graphic Novel. Loki Books, 2006. Dinah, a bored Jewish girl living in the repressed city of Utopia in the imagined America of 2020, is sent on a life-changing journey to 1943, where she joins her distant cousin Gonda and two friends in Theresienstadt. This graphic novel offers a unique way for teen readers to explore the Holocaust.


Gunderson, Jessica. The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire (Graphic Library). Capstone Press, 2006. With easy-to-read text and large, brightly-colored illustrations, this exciting retelling of the Triangle fire provides a good introduction to the topic for readers ages 8-10.

Hudson-Goff, Elizabeth and Jonatha A. Brown. Anne Frank (Graphic Biographies). World Almanac Library, 2006. The well-known story of Anne Frank is given a new twist as a graphic novel. Because of the subject matter and some disturbing images of concentration camp victims, this book is recommended for ages 10-12.

Kubert, Joe. The Adventures of Yaacov & Isaac. Mahrwood Press (distributed in the U.S. by Feldheim Publishers), 2004. Kubert’s stories about two young brothers impart Torah values and Jewish history lessons in an exciting action-adventure comic book style that is likely to appeal to elementary school boys ages 10 and up.


Lutes, Jason and Nick Bertozzi. Houdini: The Handcuff King. Hyperion, 2007. This snapshot of one day in the life of the famous showman offers an edge-of-your-seat reading experience for children ages 10 and up.

as young as 6.
Moscowitz, Moshe. The Queen of Persia: An Illustrated Adaptation of an Ancient Story. Shazak Productions, 2003. Bold cartoon-style illustrations retell the story of Queen Esther. Since this version is somewhat irreverent, it may be more suitable for children older than 12.
Sheinkin, Steve. The Adventures of Rabbi Harvey: A Graphic Novel of Jewish Wisdom and Wit in the Wild West. Jewish Lights Publishing, 2006. These ten gems about Rabbi Harvey are told in the manner of classic Jewish folktales and are illustrated in a sepia-toned graphic novel format. The humor is aimed at teens and adults.
Sturm, James. The Golem’s Mighty Swing. Drawn and Quarterly, 2003. This graphic novel follows a Jewish baseball team as they travel through the Midwest in the 1920’s. Beset with a losing record, they conjure a golem to help draw the crowds, but instead face fierce anti-Semitism. This novel is a good choice for teenage boys.

Graphic Novels for Older Teens and Adults

Maybe add the Anne Frank animated feature film was first made in 1998
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qAIRFyR6NyQ&ab_channel=AnneFrank%27sDiary-FeatureAnimatedFilm

Awarded the Children's Jury Award at the Chicago International Children's Festival. « The Film has moved me and I want to congratulate you for the high standard and sensibility in producing this film. I am sure it will be successful not only with the young audiences, but also for the elder generations. » Buddy ELIAS, President, ANNE FRANK FONDS, 1998 A LETTER BY Simon WIESENTHAL I have now viewed the English version of your film based on the Diary of Anne Frank. Thank you for sending me the tape. I must admit that at first had my doubts whether an animated nature of the images and text, this book is most suitable for adults.

With best regards, Sincerely, Simon WIESENTHAL "No previous adaptations of Anne Frank's Diary have done so with the imagination and sensitivity that characterize the animated film ANNE FRANK'S DIARY. The attendant music manages to be both unobstructive and haunting at the same time. This inspiring and poignant film is a remarkable tribute to Anne Frank." -Carol Ann Lee (Historian, author of 'Anne Frank: A biography') "...The highly realistic animation offers suspenseful touches and unusual points of view, and the music by Carine Gutlerner is excellent: spare and evocative." -Reader, Chicago " An animated version of Anne
Frank's famous diaries that make her story easily accessible for a new generation without losing the power of the original text.(...) Most moving is Anne's internal life, her reaction to their persecution, and subsequent life of total isolation, silence, terror and ultimately the positive and humanitarian attitude she is able to maintain. Complemented by cutting edge animation, the film's most significant success is its ability to use the diary entries to create an Anne Frank who is compelling and endearing without being maudlin. ” Yoshua Ford, Washington Film Festival "Animated "ANNE FRANK" retells story superbly". The movie is an achievement on several levels. Its aesthetic scheme is simple and unadorned enough to remind us that is a story of ordinary people thrust in into extraordinary circumstances, yet it's also gorgeous enough to carry us through its feature length. Its slab of colors and simple but inviting composition suggest paintings of Edward Hopper." Betsy Sherman, BOSTON GLOBE "This animated feature will undoubtedly remain the most beautiful adaptation of the most widely read work in the world. The city of Amsterdam is depicted very realistically sometimes making viewers think they are really there. The violin music moves our souls with its nostalgic air. The constantly latent emotion grows within us. Like the Diary, the movie ends when the attic occupants are arrested and the few lines that appear thereafter bring tears to our eyes and make us say: “Never again!”. " YAHOO FRANCE "By adapting the Diary of Anne Frank in animated form, you have proven your great talent for teaching by successfully producing strong and moving animated images. I am convinced your movie will not only contribute to making the Diary of Anne Frank better known but it will also spur the awareness of young people and adults, and send a universal message of respect for human beings." EUROPEAN JEWISH CONGRESS "The animation is superb, the settings exquisite. It is true to life. The director documented his research, worked on the basis of photographs. It is a true setting of the time. It made me want to go to Amsterdam. The tone

- Add:

Omar Adnan Al Abdallat Cartoonist/Speaker/Producer Born in England 24/11/1978
Holds both Jordanian and British citizenship professional cartoonist since 2008
Worked in creative production and was a driver of creativity in many renowned companies, such as; Rubicon, Abu Mahjoob, Kharabeesh
An active member of Cartoon Movement and Tomato Cartoons. Created several characters that became national symbols and are associated with Jordanians and youth, such as, Awad Abu Shiffeh, Abu Samra, Al Sheikh Khafash, Al Zaeem
Published over 2000 cartoons and 500 videos.
Co-authored and co-produced several online shows such as Mone3a Fil Seen (Banned from China), a satirical Jordanian show starring Ahmad Hasan Al Zubi.
Created and supervise a regionally acclaimed Youtube channel and its characters (3ala
Rasi) that is ranked 8th in popularity regionally according to Forbes and has been awarded the silver award by Youtube.

Active on social media platforms and has over 100,000 followers on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Motivational and inspirational speaker who participated in many local, regional and international events, such as but not limited to TEDX Oporto in Portugal in 2015, Al Doha 8th convention held by Al Jazeera in 2014.

Held several key exhibitions for his work in Jordan and abroad, amongst the organizers were, Jordanian Women Association, Jordanian Royal Court where he exhibited his works in front of HM King Abdullah II, also in Cairo Egypt and Jordanian governorates.

Advocate of women's and youth's rights and has been selected as a Jordanian icon in the campaign against violence against women by USAID, United Nations and Dutch Embassy.

Trained and held many workshops on creative production, caricature, out-of-the-box thinking, drawing, social media engagement, tolerance and human rights and expression, amongst which were Jordanian Women Association workshops that were held across Jordanian governorates.

Won many awards for his work in cartoon and social media presence, such as the Youtube silver award for “3ala Rasi”, Arab Spring from “This is Amsterdam”, Holland, and Naji Al Ali Award from Turkey.

Co-founder and partner in several creative initiatives and companies, such as Free Pen for Creative Production, Tomato Cartoon, and Kharabeesh.
WE ARE THE WORLD
WE ARE THE CHILDREN
Language is a core part of cultural identity. Our language influences the way we think, act, and perceive the world. Language is constantly changing just as the world is constantly changing. New words are created and adopted. Old words are lost. Spoken language is more fluid than the language of literature, which often forms and preserves the foundation of culture in civilizations, such as the Quran of Islamic civilization, in addition to oral traditions such as music. Mixed languages generally form as a result of contact between two or more linguistic groups, dictated by social interaction and hegemonic forces (cultural, economic, military, demographic, etc.).

The history of Semitic language morphology offers insights into how language is shaped by hegemony, contact, and survival, and reveals the adaptability of language and culture.

The Yiddish language, adapted by Ashkenazi Jews in the European Diaspora, combined German and Hebrew. The Sephardi Diaspora Jews in Spain and Northern Africa spoke Ladino, a fusion of Spanish, Hebrew and a mix of Iberian and other Middle Eastern languages. The Mizrahi Diaspora Jews developed Judeo-Arabic dialects across Iraq, Morocco, Libya, Tunisia, and Yemen. Aramaic, commonly known as the language of Jesus of Nazareth, is a Semitic language built from several Canaanite languages that spread broadly across the Middle East. The Aramaic alphabet was widely adopted for other languages including Hebrew and Arabic.

The revival of the Hebrew language took place between Europe and Palestine around the end of the 19th century, evolving from the language of Judaism to a spoken and written language later used for daily life in Israel. Modern Hebrew is the only known example of a language with no native speakers becoming the first language of millions of people. Hebrew and Arabic were the official languages of the state of Israel when it was founded in 1948 until July 2018, the Jewish Nation-State Law made Hebrew the sole official language of the state of Israel, giving Arabic
a "special status". Approximately 28.6% of Israelis speak Arabic comprised of approximately 20% Arab-Israelis whose mother-tongue is Arabic, and roughly 8.6% Israeli-Jews with varying familiarities of Arabic including Modern Standard Arabic, Judeo-Arabic, and the Palestinian Dialect. Cross-cultural language acquisition has been on the rise since 2015. 

There has always been extensive contact between Hebrew and Arabic. During the height of Islamic civilization in the Middle Ages, Jewish scholars translated many Arabic writings into Hebrew but there were many new science and philosophy concepts that couldn’t be expressed using existing Hebrew vocabulary so new Hebrew words were created using the roots and patterns of Arabic. This phenomenon of using the Semitic Arabic connection to formulate new Hebrew words happened again when modern Hebrew was revived by Eliezer ben Yehuda to create new Hebrew words to describe all of the new words of the 20th century. Arab supplies approximately 27% of the words modern Hebrew has borrowed from other languages, which is a lot considering the many foreign influences on the modern Hebrew language.

Already where Arabs and Israelis live together, Arabic words are commonly adopted by Israelis and Hebrew words by Arabs. Examples of the Israeli adoption include “yalla” meaning “Let’s go”, “ahlan” from Arabic meaning “welcome” and “akhla” meaning great, amazing in Hebrew from the same word in Arabic meaning “better”. Examples of Palestinian adoption of Hebrew include “ramzor” meaning “traffic light”, the word “mianyen” meaning “interesting”, and “kef” meaning “fun” because no Arabic equivalent exists or only exists in Modern Standard Arabic, sometimes too formal or a mouthful to say. There is also the Arab-Israeli combination of the word Arabic word “yanni” – “it means” and the Hebrew word “kilu” —“like”— to form the Arabic-Hebrew word “yanu”. Words like “makhsom”, Hebrew for “checkpoint”, have found their way into the Palestinian lexicon as well, for obvious reasons. Hebrew and Arabs shared hundreds of 3-letter roots, words, and idioms as well as hundreds of words borrowed from English and other world languages. Perhaps, generations from now, a future of peace in the region involves the gradual fusion of Hebrew, Arabic and English, into a common mixed dialect, while still of course preserving Israeli Hebrew and Palestinian Arabic.